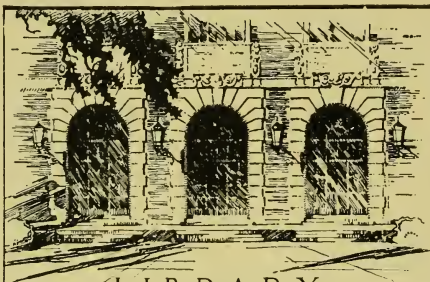


THE GREEN HILLS BY THE SEA

A MANY STORY

BY
HUGH COLEMAN
DAVIDSON





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THE GREEN HILLS BY THE SEA.

VOL. III.



M. B. Davidson
H. N. P.
THE
1887.

GREEN HILLS BY THE SEA

A MANX STORY

BY

HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE GREEN HILLS BY THE SEA.

CHAPTER I.

SUSPENSE.

DALRYMPLE'S departure was followed by an uneasy calm, as if the very atmosphere had undergone a change. It formed the chief topic of conversation; people got into a habit of talking about it in whispers; and festivities were almost completely abandoned.

Members of large communities will find it hard to realise the hold which this one

man had taken upon the town. In order to do so, they must think of the sudden removal of a very agreeable or very disagreeable person from their own households. Personal influence is like an odour, sometimes penetrating to a great distance, and sometimes scarcely able to get beyond its source. In Dalrymple's case, it was most pungent, tickling some noses pleasantly enough, but rasping others until there arose a consuming desire to put a barrier between themselves and this noxious thing. Those who disliked him lived in an uncomfortable state of expectation, as if he might drop upon them from the clouds at any moment; and those who liked him felt dispirited, because the main-spring of their gaiety was gone.

In two other quarters his absence was deeply regretted, but for very different

reasons. He was sorely missed by Bobby Beg, who had confidently looked forward to an opportunity of tweaking his flexible nose. He was also missed by the Colquitts, who learned for the first time how invaluable he had been to them. He had been their one visitor; his attentions had become part of their daily life; and now he was gone and they were left alone.

Frank and Ned, divided from one another, did not venture to stretch out a helping hand. Considering all the circumstances, they thought it better for everybody that they should stay away. And so the Colquitts drifted towards the breakers, destitution in front, and illness already upon them.

Mona, who had vainly tried to get pupils, could not but shudder when she looked ahead. The whole weight of responsibility

seemed to rest upon her, and it was not lightened by the sight of her father comfortably nursing himself by the fire-side, or of Georgie, who, poor boy, could do nothing to help. Such being the case, it was only natural that Mrs. Colquitt, though tending Nessie with all a mother's love, should grow more depressing than ever. Even the weather, which was mild, gave her a text for many melancholy discourses; she pounced upon every passing head, and firmly nailed to it that threadbare fallacy, 'A green Christmas, a full churchyard.'

On New Year's Eve there occurred an incident which greatly increased the tension at Claddagh House. Mrs. Colquitt was in a painful state of agitation about the *quaaltagh*, or first person who should cross the threshold after midnight. If he happened to be dark, she anticipated some

wonderful slice of luck; if light, a continuance of misfortune; and if a *spaagaght*, or splay-footed person, nothing short of a calamity. She had cakes, bread and cheese, and jough ready for his reception. And quite early in the evening, instead of sitting quietly by Nessie's bedside as usual, she kept trotting up and downstairs, being imperatively urged to confide to Mona her wish that the *quaaltagh* might be somebody she had just thought of, a different somebody every time.

She had just left the room after one of these visits, when Mr. Colquitt and Mona, who were keeping one another company, were startled by a piercing scream, followed by the sound of a heavy body bumping on the stairs. They ran out and found Mrs. Colquitt lying insensible on the ground. As she was not in the habit of

fainting, it was an extraordinary thing altogether. Her husband and Sheval carried her to a couch, and, while they proceeded to administer restoratives, Mona picked up the candle which had fallen into the hall, and went upstairs to investigate.

But cool-headed girl as she was, when she reached the landing, she had to clutch the balustrade, otherwise she would have shared her mother's fate. It was only by a strong effort of the will that she retained possession of her senses.

In an arm-chair placed exactly opposite the spot where she stood, with its legs crossed and its arms folded, sat a skeleton, nodding its gruesome head at her. At first she thought the movement an illusion caused by the flickering light of the candle which she held in her hand; but as she watched, too terrified to remove

her eyes from the grisly thing, she saw that it actually was moving. Its attitude denoted perfect repose; it sat there nodding as if it had fallen asleep.

Convinced of this, Mona gave way to her fears. She turned and fled downstairs.

When she had told her father of the ghastly sight on the landing, he looked quite as frightened as she did. Without a word he hurried from the room, and, meeting Cain the Leg in the hall, beckoned to him to follow.

‘I felt funny like all over,’ said Cain the Leg, when he afterwards described the scene. Apparently this internal fun consisted of a relaxation of all the joints, for never did a more remarkable limpness come over a man than came over Cain the Leg when his eyes fell upon the skeleton,

nodding in the arm-chair. Nothing would induce him to approach it, though he tremblingly followed with the candle when Mr. Colquitt carried it into a room which was a confusion of boxes.

‘This,’ said Mr. Colquitt, with emotion, ‘is Master Georgie’s doing. A fine mess the young rascal has got me into.’

The skeleton, which had been tied into the chair, was evidently the work of an amateur. It was clumsily put together with coarse wire, some of the bones were missing, and those that were present formed anything but a homogeneous whole. Still, such as it was, this singular old man was proud of it. It had given him occupation while his wife was out of the way—and while his family were looking forward to starvation. That Georgie should have discovered it and played this dan-

gerous practical joke with it, was a most annoying thing. What on earth should he say to his wife? There was a long narrow empty box close by, and Mr. Colquitt prepared to transfer the skeleton from the chair to it.

‘But look!’ gasped Cain the Leg, with eyes starting from his head. ‘It’s alive—oh, murder, it’s alive.’

‘Stop that row,’ said Mr. Colquitt, angrily.

‘But look, sir, look!’ said Cain the Leg, pointing a very shaky hand at the nodding skeleton.

Mr. Colquitt raised the top of the skull, which had been sawn across and opened with a wire hinge. Then, with a certain air of satisfaction, he motioned to the startled man, who approached fearfully, craning forward at each step to ascertain

whether he had come within sight. When Cain the Leg could see into the cavity, he beheld a toad—the toad which Dalrymple had presented to Mr. Colquitt.

‘I don’t think,’ said Mr. Colquitt, smiling for the first time, ‘your mistress will look for it in there.’ With which, he proceeded to put the skeleton into the box and lock it up.

This affair caused a tremendous commotion, which did not subside for weeks. Indeed, it was never forgotten by those who participated in it. Georgie, now very penitent and frightened, was called out of his hiding-place and severely reprimanded, but it was upon his father that most of the censure fell. Mrs. Colquitt insisted that the whole thing was of his contriving, and, though she was quite mistaken here, there was some excuse for her, considering the shock she had received.

To complete her misfortunes, the *quaaltagh* turned out to be a *spooraght*, so she commenced the new year with a terribly heavy load. Besides her real troubles, she was now harassed by an imaginary one scarcely less grievous. In her attempts to guess at the nature of the disaster awaiting the family—whether it was to be a serious turn in Nessie's illness or what—she brought a great deal of unnecessary worry upon herself and others. If only there had been somebody from the outside world for her to talk to, it might have eased her mind. But there was not one. And so, for the Colquitts, the dark months were dark with trouble.

As for Frank, he was haunted by the disquieting suspicion that Dalrymple's departure was part of a carefully prepared plan. Though he could not see how to fit

it in, he clung to this idea most tenaciously, turning it over in his mind day after day, so that his anger was kept at high pressure. He invented plot and counterplot; thought of everything Dalrymple was likely to think of, and set something else against it; seemed to have provided for every emergency; and yet was not satisfied with his barricade.

There was a certain legend running in Frank's mind.

If tradition can be believed, there are underground passages connecting Castle Rushen with the abbey at Ballasalla, which is nearly two miles distant. They are said to communicate with a network of magnificent streets perpetually lighted up with a silver glow like moonlight. From time to time hardy explorers have gone down there, some never to be heard of again, and

others to return with marvellous tales of adventure. One man, armed with a ploughshare, arrived after a long walk at a rock to which was chained an old blind giant with a long and snowy beard. 'And what are they doing up there?' he asked of the traveller. 'Och! just much about the same as usual.' 'Give me hold of that ploughshare,' said the giant. And crushing it like a filbert, he bellowed: 'There are still men in the Isle of Man.'

Now, this was the very thing that Frank earnestly desired to show Dalrymple. His standpoint had changed and was still changing. There could be no doubt that the problem was approaching a solution, a most desirable result for which his uncle, his wife, and most of his friends were striving.

One stormy afternoon towards the end

of January, Diana saw Mr. Maddrell crossing the market-place, and, acting upon a sudden impulse, went out to speak to him. More than once during the last few weeks she had tried to see Frank at his office, but without success, for he was seldom there in the vacation. The greater part of the time he spent in some pursuit likely to replenish the scanty larder at home, either in shooting or else in coursing with Dr. Mylworry, who thanked his stars that, owing to the healthiness of the town, he had but few patients to interfere with his sport. Unable to meet the nephew, Diana thought she would try the uncle.

Mr. Maddrell greeted her with cold politeness. He bowed, but did not offer to shake hands. The wind being so high that she found it difficult to stand, he led her to the weather side of the freestone

column. Her spirits, which had began to fall, rose again at this piece of thoughtfulness. As concisely as possible she stated her request, concluding with a hope that he would help her to put an end to a situation which was intolerable.

‘I shall be very glad,’ he replied, gravely, ‘when some settlement has been reached. If it should be Frank’s wish that I should receive you as my niece, you shall have no cause to reproach me for want of heartiness. But at present the decision does not rest in my hands.’

‘But oh, Mr. Maddrell, won’t you use your influence with him?’

‘You see, I’m not in possession of the full facts. I don’t know who is right and who is wrong. Frank has not volunteered any information, and I have not asked for it. Therefore, my safest plan is to hold my tongue.’

‘Then you won’t help me,’ said Diana, chilled by the old advocate’s reserve.

‘To speak quite frankly, I not only can’t help you, but, if your interests should clash with those of my nephew, I am bound to side with him. Don’t misunderstand me,’ said he, looking at her kindly. ‘We in the Isle of Man hold the ties of relationship to be paramount. If you should hear a word of mine that seems to you harsh, remember, it has been prompted not by unfriendliness towards you, but solely by a wish to protect Frank.’

‘And in protecting him,’ said Diana, with a bright smile, ‘you will protect me, his wife.’

The old man’s eyes lighted up with pleasure. He seemed about to give free rein to his feelings ; but, suddenly recollecting himself, he gravely offered her his arm

and conducted her to her own door—a circumstance that caused no small amount of gossip in the town. It was currently reported that Mr. Maddrell had undertaken to mediate between husband and wife, and everybody put forward his or her version as an indisputable fact.

But attention was diverted into another channel by the threatening aspect of the weather. Though it grew calmer towards sunset, there could be no mistaking the wild look overhead, the scared way in which the clouds raced up from the sea and took refuge behind the mountains, the ragged aspect of the sky to windward, the heavy ground-swell tumbling upon the beach, and the strange sound of the approaching wind, not unlike the distant bay of a pack of hounds. There was clearly a storm in progress, as the gulls and gannets

knew when they fled away inshore to cower under the hedgerows.

It was destined to prove a very memorable storm. Among the many who suffered from its violence was Dalrymple. He who had made his first entrance into Castletown amid the strains of martial music, was on his way back amid the thunder of the sea. But whether he would ever reach his destination seemed extremely doubtful. The Gordian knot, which had been troubling so many minds, was in danger of being cut in a way they had never anticipated.

It blew very hard after midnight, and on the following morning the wind, after a brief lull, increased to a furious gale, which brought a dense, drizzling rain sweeping in from the sea.

Not knowing what else to do, Frank

went to his office. But he had not been there long when a fisherman ran in to say that a vessel had gone ashore opposite Claddagh House. She was a small schooner, he said, and appeared to be breaking-up fast, but the driving rain rendered anything more than an occasional glimpse of her impossible.

Here, perhaps, was the very chance that Frank had been longing for, but why, oh, why was his enemy away at the time? His oilskins and sou'-wester were hanging up behind the door. He hurried into them and went away down to the beach.

CHAPTER II.

THE STORM.

‘SURELY, Ned, you are not going out in such weather as this,’ said Mrs. Christorey, looking at the rain which the wind was hurling against the window.

‘Yes, mother,’ replied Ned, buttoning up his overcoat. ‘There may be something to do.’

‘But there will be plenty to do it.’

‘You wouldn’t have me stand idly by, I know.’

Her gaze was bent upon him anxiously.

Though she would not come between him and what he considered to be his duty, no matter how dangerous it might be, she was a little afraid that his rejection by Nessie might have given birth to a certain recklessness which was only waiting for an opportunity to show itself. This was a frame of mind in which he should not leave the house with her consent at a time when a wreck was a not unlikely occurrence. However, what she saw in his face convinced her she had been mistaken. Though she could not bid him go, her smile was enough. He stooped down and kissed her.

But as he was turning to leave the room his father entered, stiff as a poker.

‘What’s all this tomfoolery?’ he demanded. ‘You’re not going out, Ned?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Then,’ said the major, pointing at Toby, ‘take that ugly beast with you, and pray that he may be blown away.’

Ned went out smiling, for he knew that his father was nearly as fond of Toby as he was himself; and he left the dog behind. Though the weather was good enough for himself, it was, he considered, too bad for his shaggy friend. So he hurried away through the storm alone.

The town, as Ned passed through it, appeared utterly deserted. In the market-place the wind carried everything before it; coming in sharp gusts from every point of the compass, it threw the straws into such bewilderment that they knew not which way to turn. The grey walls of the Castle were almost black with the rain; in one place a great curtain of ivy had been torn away, and the ugly network

of roots was flapping in the wind ; and there was no ensign floating over the northern tower as usual, lest the massive flag-post should be hurled into the keep below. The barracks and all the houses around were grimy with salt and dust and rain ; everything looked bleak, and blurred, and desolate.

There was not a single person to be seen, except the two sentries trying to shelter themselves in their boxes. By the way, about an hour later, a strange thing happened to the sentry in front of the guard-room on the quay. Such was the force of the wind that he was blown into the harbour, and but for his heavy overcoat, which had become inflated with air, would certainly have been drowned.

Hearing of the wreck from the sentry, Ned went across the drawbridge, through

the framework of which the wind was whistling shrilly, while the chains kept up an incessant clanking. In the harbour the water was smooth enough, plashing dismally around the huddled vessels, but outside the waves were bursting like huge bombs against the pier, and flying over it in dense clouds of smoke. From the Douglas Road it was possible to see a little, but not much, of the weltering waste that lay below the rain and spray. The tide being high, the bay was full of wind-driven waves, tossing and struggling and hissing as they rushed onward to the very wall, to leap high into the air and fall upon the road with a drenching 'swish,' barely audible amid the roar of the gale and the thunder upon the beach.

Almost opposite the gates of Claddagh House there was, in the wall, an opening

leading down to the shore, which at this point rose more abruptly in a bank of shingle. And here stood a group of men and women, gazing earnestly seaward. When Ned looked in the same direction, he could just perceive a dark object looming through the mist, and disappearing every other minute beneath an avalanche of surge. The unfortunate vessel had struck upon a pebbly ridge, which had been formed by the action of the tide sweeping round the pier, and was prevented from shifting by the outcrop of the limestone layers.

Gradually the curtain lifted, and little by little the hull and mast and spars came into view. After she had grounded, the wind and sea had swung her round, so that, with her deck sloping sharply towards the shore, she now lay broadside on

to the waves, which were pouring over her incessantly, smothering her beneath torrents of dark-green water and snow-white foam, lifting now her bow and now her stern to batter them against the shingle and keen edges of the rocks. She had been schooner-rigged, but every stitch of canvas had been either taken off her or else carried away. Her foremast, also, had gone by the board: evidently after she had struck, for, held by the lee-rigging, it was ramming against her side and threatening to stave it with the rise and fall of every sea. The mainmast was still standing, and there were a few dark specks clinging to it. But hearing a startled cry from the people on the beach, Ned looked again, and lo! it was gone.

He hurried down to Frank, who had only just arrived upon the scene. Under

the influence of this dreadful catastrophe, the two friends met as if there had never been any disagreement between them.

‘Frank,’ said Ned, eagerly, ‘can’t we do anything to help them?’

‘I’m afraid not, Ned,’ replied Frank, sadly.

‘Poor things,’ put in an old fisherman, ‘it’s all over with them now. Anyway, no boat could live in that broken water yonder.’

The rise of the bank where the dismasted hulk lay, partly stopped the seas; so that, after expending their strength upon her, they poured onward again in a semi-circle of broken water, which was lovely to look upon. Surely there is nothing so alluringly beautiful as the whiteness of foam upon a rocky coast where its purity is unsullied by sand or mud. It

has a delicate creamy softness which allows the eye to peer right into it, so different from the impenetrable glance-repelling whiteness of snow. You forget the virulence of its hiss in the fascination of its matchless beauty, and feel that you must lave in it and so bring yourself into contact with such heavenly spotlessness.

But when it is the covering of death, when it is contemptuously tossing to and fro dark things that once were men, and when a battered hulk looms through the veil of rain and spray in the background, one views it with very different feelings. So beautiful, yet so cruel! Frank and Ned shuddered as they looked at it; the faces of the fishermen standing close by in their dripping oilskins were grim and solemn; and the women and children

were huddled together like terrified sheep behind.

There was nothing to be done but wait and watch until the sea should choose to deliver up its prey. One by one those dark things came ashore; one by one they were grasped by strong hands rushing fearlessly into danger to save them from as much ill-treatment as possible; and one by one they were tenderly borne to a place of shelter, thence to travel their last journey together. For several hours this melancholy work went on. Frank and Ned stayed there, doing what they could, which was little enough. The storm, having wreaked its vengeance, began to abate, the wind following the sun a point or two and falling rapidly. But the rain came down in torrents, which made it more difficult to see than ever.

At some little distance along the shore a sailor's chest was washed up, unnoticed by all except one man, Clague, who stood looking at it, and finally broke it open. He was not exactly drunk at the time, but incessant drinking had so deadened his moral faculties that he was scarcely responsible for his acts, his hatred against the individual having expanded into hatred against the whole human race. If the brand of Cain was not upon his forehead, it was certainly upon his heart.

The chest was nearly filled with clothes ; among them lay a gold chain and a locket containing the portrait of a young girl, probably the dead sailor's sweetheart. Here was a story in miniature ; a story so told that it would have brought tears into the eyes of most men. In Clague's case,

however, it gave to his gaunt features an expression that can only be called wolfish. He picked up the trinket and was about to put it in his pocket, but suddenly dropped it, and, with a muttered oath, strode off.

It was the appearance of Frank that had scared him away. He looked after Clague's retreating figure which he easily recognised, but made no attempt to follow. Why should he? The gold chain, which would have been taken first, showed that nothing had been touched, so no actual harm had been done, whatever might have been the brute's intentions. No, let him go his own way; if sooner or later it did not end at the gallows. it would be a wonder. So Frank, seeing Bobby Beg in the distance, summoned him to assist, and together they carried the chest to a spot

where the rest of the wreckage was collected.

‘Look, Master Frank!’ exclaimed Bobby Beg, when he had set down his burden. ‘Who are they yonder?’

Frank looked in the direction indicated, and was surprised to see a number of strange men coming along the road. Their dress, which had been sadly damaged by the weather, showed them to belong to a man-of-war, and they were headed by an officer in naval uniform. They walked as if greatly exhausted, and, when they came in sight of the people on the beach, leaned against the wall and made signals to them. There was a general rush to the spot.

The officer announced himself to be Lieutenant Fosbroke, of H.M. brig-of-war *Goshawk*, now a complete wreck. She had

been despatched to the island with military stores, he said, had been caught in the gale, and had run on some rocks which he had since ascertained to be situated on the inside of Langness. How she had got into that position he did not know, but the fishermen knew well enough that it was the effect of the tide sweeping round the Skerranes. All their boats had been carried away, except two which had been sent off to fetch assistance. One of them, under the charge of the purser, had not arrived as yet; but the other—the lieutenant's—had reached Derbyhaven after a terrible pull of three hours.

It was an odd course to take, but then they did not know where they were. Instead of coming straight across the bay—and this would have been difficult enough—they must have gone outside again, and

have rowed along the rocky coast of Langness, where the bottom is so rough and the current so strong that even in calm weather the water is often like a seething caldron. How the boat managed to keep afloat in the wild sea which must have prevailed out there during the height of the gale, was long afterwards a standing puzzle.

— But perhaps the most singular part of the lieutenant's narrative was yet to come. There was a passenger on board the *Goshawk*; at least, if she still held together, which seemed very unlikely. Being an intimate friend of the captain's, he had joined her by invitation, for he too was going to Castletown. His name was Fabian Dalrymple.

Bobby Beg hailed this announcement with a yell of delight. To the amazement of everybody, he tucked the brimless

hat under his arm, and, heedless of the rain pouring down upon his yellow hair, began to dance a sort of hornpipe in the muddy road. His fellow-townsmen, all glistening like seals, looked on with indignant surprise ; opposite stood the strangers, the lieutenant slightly in advance of his men, watching with bewilderment pure and simple. It struck them as a curious reception after their escape from the sea, while they were telling of friends who were still in deadly peril, if not already drowned.

‘Hoot, sirs!’ said Bobby Beg, pausing for a moment in his frantic dance. ‘If a body won’t take a dreain’s feather, what happens to him? Shipwreck—shipwreck—shipwreck!’ With which he again plunged into the hornpipe, but was speedily seized and quieted by force.

And now a rescue had to be attempted. Ned looked at Frank, and Frank looked at Ned; not a word was spoken; but by a simultaneous impulse, as if that look had flashed the thoughts of each to the other, they moved side by side, and so led the way to the town.

Neither said very much as they walked along, stepping out as briskly as if they were coming fresh to the labours of the day. If either had glanced at the other's face he would have seen there the reflected expression of his own—a hard, determined look about the features and a smile of pleasure in the eyes. After a friend's life, perhaps most of us would prefer to save that of an enemy; and, while Frank hoped he were going to do the one, Ned hoped he was going to do the other. Moreover, both were exceedingly glad not

only to shake hands, but also to feel that the friendship cemented by a danger shared in common would stand a severer strain than was likely to be put upon it. It was strange, they reflected, that the man who had divided them, should now be linking them together more firmly than they had ever been before.

Frank owned the safest boat in the harbour. Like most of the others, she was lying above bridge for the winter, but he soon had her launched and brought alongside the quay. She had belonged to a whaler, and was built on much the same lines as a lifeboat, curving up to the bow and stern, which were both alike, but without any contrivance for righting her if she should be capsized. When examined, she was found to leak a good deal, the paint having been knocked off in places by

her last season's work, and also by children who had fine fun cruising on shore. However, as Frank said when he returned from his office with his oars and rowlocks, that did not matter much, for she was sure to be pretty full of water before she got back.

There were several other boats being prepared for sea, so the spectators were broken up into groups, but the greater number stood around Frank and Ned, who had no lack of assistance. There were still four vacant seats in the whale-boat, and the question was who should fill them.

While Frank was considering, there came along the quay two stalwart yellow-bearded men, marching side by side. An active old woman, who grasped with one hand the shawl that protected her head, trotted slightly in front, and occasionally

turned back to look at them. Mrs. Quirk had good reason to be proud of her sons, who were two of the best and most daring fishermen on the coast. Marriage had done but little to separate them, for they lived in adjoining cottages, shared one boat between them, and were seldom seen apart. If such brotherly affection as theirs was rare, so also was the assiduity with which they followed their calling. Whether or not they liked fishing for its own sake, they could not have pursued it with more unflagging industry had it been their sport, instead of the toil by which they earned their daily bread. Where there were fish and a tolerable chance of catching them, there the two Quirks were almost certain to be found.

‘Here they are, Master Frank,’ said their mother.

‘Ay, we’re ready, sir,’ said the sons, ‘if you’ll have us.’

‘Have you!’ cried Frank. ‘That I will, and right gladly too.’

Then the other men, who had only been waiting for some one to take the lead, all volunteered in a body. But only a couple more being required, Frank selected two powerful fellows called Fargher and Bridson respectively. With as little delay as possible they took their places in the boat, pushed off, and paddled down the harbour, the people running along the quay, and cheering.

Some of the other boats had already started, but had been obliged to return. They were but small skiffs, quite unable to stand such a sea as was still raging outside. Indeed one had no sooner got beyond the pier-head than it was upset, its

occupants being rescued only with the greatest difficulty. In the end, the whale-boat had to venture alone on the stormy passage across the bay.

Though the waves were still breaking over the pier,—but much less heavily than an hour or two before, for the tide was ebbing,—a crowd collected near the lighthouse in order to see the six go by, perhaps to see the last of them. As the boat passed, they sent after it a ringing cheer, and from the midst of the strife of wind and rain and sea came a faint cheer in return.

It was now that the real struggle began. Suddenly meeting the full force of the gale, as it rushed past the pier-head, the boat stopped as if frightened, and then sheered away to leeward, no attempt being made to stay its progress in that direction,

for the oars had been similarly arrested. It was an anxious moment for the spectators. As far as the eye could see, the bay was ruled with long, straight lines of breakers, each with the smoke flying from its foaming crest, and deep down between two of these monsters lay the defenceless crew. But, before a wave could burst upon them, the six strong bodies were swinging back, dragging with them the dead weight of their craft. With her head to the sea, she went over the water like a duck. And now climbing the snow-capped hills, and now descending the green valleys, they rowed on their way towards Langness, until at length the mist and rain hid them from sight.

Had Frank seen that little piece of can-buric waving him God-speed from the pier-head? It was held in the hand of a tall

and beautiful woman, clad in a water-proof. Many of the rough sailors, with that thoughtful care which they show so conspicuously at times, had stationed themselves to weather of her, so as to shield her as much as possible from the heavy showers of spray that were falling around. More than one, seeing her tremble in the fierce gusts, had implored her not to stand so near the edge. But she resolutely kept her place, her eyes fixed on the boat in which her husband was pulling stroke.

When Diana heard of what Frank was about to do, nothing would detain her in the house. She had loved him before; she was proud of him now. Heedless of wind and rain, she had come down to the pier, and when he passed on his way to attempt the rescue of the crew of the

Goshawk and its one passenger, Fabian Dalrymple, she was among those who cheered him. Long after nearly everybody else had gone, she stood there, peering into the grey confusion which had swallowed him up.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE STORM.

AFTER shifting round to the south-west, and so helping to deaden the sea, the wind fell rapidly; and about midnight there was little more than a light breeze, which died away about daybreak.

The morning rose in smiles. It was one of those sharp contrasts that make one inclined to distrust the memory. For the vivid recollection of a past altogether out of harmony with the present is no easy matter, until the appearance of some visible

token, when the ideas are suddenly crystallised around it, just as water below zero is almost instantaneously frozen by a grain of sand.

The sky was a deep, undappled blue, and the sun shone with a warmth quite unusual for the end of January. Over the gently heaving surface of the bay the gulls went by on lazy wing. The green hills seemed to have ranged themselves close to the grey houses clustering around Castle Rushen, and the whole landscape to have been compressed, so that the eye could look right into it as into a well of crystal water.

There was a slight ground-swell tumbling upon the pebbles with a pleasant melodious rhythm. Along the shore was drawn up a row of carts, while big-booted men with pitchforks in their hands were

wading knee-deep in the water, collecting for manure the long brown tangles which the storm had plentifully strewn along the coast. Some women were engaged in the same task, though they kept to the dry land and were often accompanied by rough ponies with panniers slung over their backs. There were also a number of children playing about, gathering another species of seaweed called dullish, which is supposed to be edible, but tastes not unlike leather impregnated with iodine. Some day, perhaps, physicians will turn their attention to the sea and convert it into a mighty medicine-chest.

But the visible token, the grain of sand? Ah! that lay on the beach beneath Claddagh House. Or, yonder among the pitiless rocks of Langness, whither a stream of people was now going to see what re-

mained of the ill-fated *Goshawk*. Around those two dismasted hulks many a thought might surely crystallize. One glance was enough to bring the scene of yesterday into view.

Early in the afternoon Captain Nugent, after talking for some time to the High Bailiff in front of the barracks, entered his friend's quarters and found him lying on a couch by the side of the fire. Dalrymple looked rather worn and tired, but otherwise much the same as ever.

‘That’s a handsome thing you have done,’ said Nugent, taking the arm-chair opposite.

‘What?’

‘Why, given a hundred pounds to each of the families of the two poor fellows who were drowned, and fifty pounds a-piece to the other couple.’

‘Pooh! Nonsense, I couldn’t have done less,’ said Dalrymple, carelessly.

‘Many would have done a great deal less.’

‘But the money is nothing to me, and, you see, I have no trouble about it.’

In order to rescue the crew of the *Goshawk*, the whale-boat had been obliged to go backwards and forwards several times. All went well until it was nearing the end of its last journey, when it was capsized in the heavy surf. All its passengers were saved, however, including Captain Neville and Dalrymple, who had refused to leave the brig until his friend did. So also were Frank, Ned, and the Quirks. But the other two men, Fargher and Bridson, were drowned, in the sight of a large number of spectators who could do very little to help them.

A subscription having been suggested for the benefit of the bereaved families, Dalrymple had headed it with a couple of hundred pounds. In addition to this, he had made each of the Quirks a present of fifty pounds. Hence Nugent's remarks.

Dalrymple had also proposed to keep the *Goshawk's* crew at his own expense during their enforced stay in Castletown. But this the townspeople would not hear of; it was for them to do, they said, and for no one else. So, while the officers became the guests of the Lieutenant-Governor, the crew were provided with comfortable billets for the few days they would have to remain.

'You are a queer fellow, Dalrymple,' said Nugent, gravely regarding the other. 'I have known you do some very excellent things, and, if you'll excuse my saying so, I

have known you do some rather—well, things that I didn't at all like. But, whatever it is, you do it as if you don't care two straws about it.'

'Perhaps I don't,' said Dalrymple, with a lazy laugh.

'Ah!'

'With one exception.'

'Miss Nessie Colquitt?'

'Right you are.'

'Then,' said Nugent, with an elevation of the eyebrows, 'why did you run away from her?'

'I scarcely know. Perhaps I wanted a holiday.'

'Nonsense, man.'

'Perhaps I was afraid of myself.'

'Ah! And you're not now?'

'What a fellow you are to ask questions,' said Dalrymple, with a shrug of his shoul-

ders. 'At least, I am sure of myself now.'

It was quite true, as might be inferred from his words, that he had gone away with some idea of shaking off his fetters before they became too irksome. It was also true that his attempt had been a signal failure: so much so that, getting Captain Neville's invitation to return in the *Goshawk*, he had jumped at it, though his leave had several weeks to run. As weak natures almost invariably do, and even strong ones sometimes in critical emergencies, he had accepted it as the finger of Fate, pointing out the road he should take.

At the same time, his absence had also been prompted by another motive which, not being very flattering in any way, he was careful to keep to himself. Finding that he was not making satisfactory pro-

gress with Nessie, he thought her illness—when he would not be able to see her—an excellent opportunity for showing the Colquitts how indispensable he had become to them. If he succeeded in curing himself, no great harm would have been done; if he failed, he would return with a better prospect of gaining his end. It was an undeniably strong card to play, but two or three things, the shipwreck among them, had occurred to interfere with its success.

Some faint idea of the truth dawned upon Nugent, and, not knowing exactly what to say, he picked up a stained and crumpled newspaper which was lying on the hearthrug. Though a very ordinary act between friends of old standing, it produced in Dalrymple a surprising display of energy. He sprang to his feet, seized the newspaper, and tossed it behind the

couch. Then, instantly falling back into his usual indolent manner, he said, with an uneasy laugh :

‘ Hang it all ! when you come to a man’s rooms, you come to talk, and not to read.’

‘ But,’ objected Nugent, regarding the subaltern with an astonished stare, ‘ you don’t generally correct your friends’ faults in that impulsive way.’

‘ No, perhaps not. Consistency was never my strong point.’

‘ Nor spasms your favourite malady.’

‘ True again,’ said Dalrymple, returning to his position on the couch. ‘ But much may be forgiven to one who has suffered shipwreck. I’m an invalid, you know.’

‘ Yes, you had a narrow squeak,’ said Nugent, thoughtfully, after a short silence. ‘ Have you seen Maddrell yet ? He’s a fine young fellow, you must admit.’

‘I hear his voice in the hall.’

‘Then I’ll go.’

Nugent was glad to get away, for the recent incident had troubled him more than he would have liked to confess. There was, he felt sure, something in that paper which his friend did not wish him to read. He knew it was an English newspaper, but he had not observed either the title or the date. What was the meaning of this new mystery? And now that he came to think of it, Dalrymple’s face bore an expression that was strange to it: a sort of furtive look as if he was afraid of being watched. Nugent pictured to himself a man idly admiring a will-o’-the-wisp, then following it a little way with careful footsteps, and finally yielding to a mad infatuation to pursue it through a morass which at the outset he would have shud-

dered at. Could it be so with Dalrymple? It was earnestly to be hoped not.

As Nugent left the room, Frank entered. Though he had not actually come to like the man whose life he had saved, his feelings had undergone a very remarkable change. Whether it was the danger to his own life during those perilous journeys to and from the shipwrecked vessel, or whether it was a sanguine hope that this might be the starting-point for a happier future, or whatever the reason—for Frank scarcely knew himself—there could be no denying that his former antipathy had vanished. He regarded Dalrymple no longer as an enemy, but rather as a *protégé* in whom he could take both pleasure and pride.

It rested entirely with Dalrymple whether or not this improved state of

affairs should continue, and unfortunately the obligation he had incurred had only increased his dislike. He winced at the thought that he owed his life to the man whom he had deliberately laid himself out to molest. But what he had done in the past was nothing compared with what he was doing now. True, it was only a sin of omission, but it cast a most discreditable light upon his every subsequent act. He was at once ashamed and indignant, as if he had suffered some grievous injury, partly through a fault of his own. However, if he could not rule his feelings or alter the line of conduct which he persuaded himself had been forced upon him, he could mend his manners, and this he did.

‘How are you, Dalrymple?’ asked Frank, warmly. ‘You don’t look very

well yet. No, don't get up. I'll sit here.' After shaking hands, he took the arm-chair.

'Oh! there's nothing the matter with me. I'm a bit tired; that's all. You ought to be more tired than I am.'

'Living by the sea-side, one soon gets used to hard work.'

'You saved my life, Maddrell,' said Dalrymple, raising his eyes to look at Frank. 'I scarcely know whether to thank you or not.'

'Pray, don't. I only did what anyone else would have done under the same circumstances.'

'That may be your point of view; mine is different, naturally enough. I have to ask myself, what is the value of my life to myself or anybody else? The only answer I can see at present is, None whatever.'

On the other hand, my death would have saved a great deal of trouble.'

'Oh, but that's nonsense,' said Frank; rather hurt at what seemed like an attempt to depreciate his work. 'You are out of sorts to-day, and no wonder.'

'Perhaps so; but don't think I undervalue your act, for all that. It was a wonderfully plucky thing to do.'

'That paper,' interrupted Frank, anxious to get away from the subject, and pointing underneath the couch, 'seems to have been shipwrecked also.'

Dalrymple's legs descended from the couch so as to obstruct Frank's view, and his manner was very uneasy.

'Yes,' he said, with an attempt at carelessness; 'it's an old paper that I happened to have in my pocket at the time.'

'An English paper? We don't often

see them here. Might I look at it, when you have done with it?’

‘Well, as a matter of fact, it’s not in a fit state to be read; otherwise, you should have it, of course. Have you seen Christorey to-day?’

Finding that he was not getting on as well as he had expected, Frank did not stay long. The new Dalrymple that he had been setting up in his fancy was very different from the man in the barracks, who was again very different from the man that used to reside there. Between the three, Frank was naturally puzzled.

And now the meeting that he had so long evaded was forced upon him. As he was leaving the barracks, he met Diana, and—if we exclude the occasion of her ride in a wheel-barrow—for the first time since she left the sick-room in which they

had been married, husband and wife stood face to face. She had seen him cross the market-place, and, guessing where he was going, had come out and waited for him. She was little less embarrassed than he was, but her embarrassment sprang from a want of reliance upon her own powers, a strange thing with her; and his from a fear of being obliged to say something that would pain her.

Dalrymple, who was looking out of his window, watched them with a painful conflict of emotions, his handsome face changing colour every other moment. And Bobby Beg, who had stationed himself in front of the custom-house opposite—a position he often occupied afterwards—watched Dalrymple as a cat watches a mouse. Though what he saw would have perplexed a wiser brain than his, he was

pretty confident that his time would come.

‘Frank,’ said Diana, panting a little, ‘I must tell you how very, very proud I feel. It was a noble deed—a deed worthy of those old Manx heroes of whom you are so fond of talking. Yes, Frank, “there are still men in the Isle of Man.”’

He started at this. It showed such an intimate acquaintance with his thoughts.

‘I stood on the pier,’ Diana went on, ‘and watched you go by.’

‘You did!’ he exclaimed, looking at her wonderingly.

‘Yes,’ she said, with a sudden pang. For, if he had cared about her, would he not have expected it? and would not a loving eye have immediately pounced upon her signal? ‘And when I saw the immense waves and the little boat with its brave crew, oh, Frank, how I trembled!’

‘But wasn’t the sea breaking heavily over the pier?’ he stammered, trying to keep the conversation at a commonplace level.

‘No, I don’t think so. And you saved them all, Frank! Didn’t it make you feel very happy?’

‘I daresay we should have felt happy if it hadn’t been for the two poor fellows who were drowned. And that reminds me I have something to thank you for. I hear you have been exceedingly kind to their families. The Quirks, too, tell me you have given them a very large sum. It’s very good of you indeed. I only wish I could have helped them myself.’

‘But,’ interrupted Diana, with a pleading smile, ‘isn’t it the same thing, Frank, when your wife has helped them?’

He made no answer, but kept his face

turned steadily away from her. Frank was beginning to realise that the accomplished fact, against which he had so long rebelled, would prove too strong for him in the end, but he could not yet bring himself to yield. Diana, on the other hand, was slowly but surely becoming convinced that she had set herself an impossible task, and yet she struggled against it quite as desperately as he did. There was a certain similarity between his case and hers which sometimes entered her head to be indignantly repelled; for was there ever a woman who did not consider herself exceptional? She would make him love her; she would not let him go. And so Diana nailed her colours to the mast and fired away.

‘Oh, Frank,’ she cried, ‘how long is this to continue? Are we never,

never to be united? The thing is done and can't be undone. Do you hate me so ?'

'Hate you, Diana. Oh, why won't you understand ?'

'Then what is to be the end of it? Come with me, my husband,' she pleaded, laying her hand on his arm, with her beautiful face looking coaxingly into his. 'Come with me to your home and mine. See, there it is! Mother is at the door waiting to receive us. Come, Frank! Do, do come now!'

Unfortunately for Diana, she was interrupted by several lads rushing wildly across the market-place, which had hitherto contained only herself, Frank, and Bobby Beg. They appeared to be racing for Dr. Mylworry's house. As soon as one of them reached it, the others stopped and began

to chatter. There was evidently something amiss.

A soldier pushed his head out of one of the windows of the barracks.

‘What’s the matter?’ he cried.

‘—— shot,’ was all that could be heard.

‘Who?’

But the answer was inaudible.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST STRAW.

At high tide the extremity of Langness is broken up into several joints by narrow gulleys which connect the bay with the sea outside. The joints are small islets placed end to end, covered with spongy grass and guarded on every side by dangerous crags. The last of them, the Skerranes, has no grass and is often partly submerged. The whole series forms a slight curve facing the town.

It was upon the inner side of this

curve that the *Goshawk* had been wrecked. A large staff of men, engaged to save the military stores she had brought, were employed upon her all morning, while a considerable number of spectators lined the grassy headland behind. But about one o'clock there arose a shout that she was moving. As they watched, the hulk, lightened of part of her cargo, floated on the incoming tide, glided off the rock, and with a plunge sank in deep water, only a few bubbles and spars marking the spot where she had gone down. Fortunately, there was nobody on board at the time.

There being nothing more to see, the spectators presently returned home, and the salvage men soon afterwards followed, leaving the rescued articles in charge of a sentry who had been sent over by Cap-

tain Nugent. It was a strange scene, this solitary soldier standing like some scarlet ibis by the side of the glistening sea ; on the brown rocks close by, a melancholy collection of damaged guns, ammunition, cabin fittings, spars and ropes ; the caves on either hand opening their great black mouths as if they would devour him ; over yonder across the bay, the town and the row of watchful hills behind, sunlit to-day, dark as they were yesterday ; and away to the left, the Stack and a long range of headlands merging in the Calf.

One of the peculiarities of the island is, that almost as soon as children can walk they tumble into a boat and paddle off to sea. The old hen, running frantically about the shore, may cluck after her

daring ducklings in vain; away they go, making no end of a delightful splash. Oh, yes, they return—sometimes, at any rate: usually about meal-time. In this connection it may not be inappropriate to add that there are very few Manx sailors who can swim; so, when anybody falls into the water, there is seldom anybody to pull him out.

Shortly after the *Goshawk* sank, Georgie Colquitt and a number of other boys borrowed a fisherman's skiff and started to row across the bay. The oldest of them was fourteen and the youngest nine; a finer collection of young pickles never went afloat. When stroke was struggling with an oar high above his head, bow was lying in the bottom of the boat—bowled over by a crab, and the rest were roaring with laughter. The coxswain issued the

most contradictory orders which were never obeyed, and, when the crew got tired, they amused themselves by trying how near they could go to upsetting the skiff without actually doing it. In brief, they had rare fun.

Though one after the other had a turn at the oars, it took them a long time to accomplish their two-mile journey. When at length they approached their destination, Georgie Colquitt was sitting on the knees of another little fellow in the stern; two of the older boys were rowing, and half-a-dozen bright young eager faces were hanging over the gunwale like flowers in a vase.

The sentry, pacing with shouldered rifle by the side of the wreckage on the rock, challenged the party. He had strict orders, he called out to them, not to allow anybody

to approach. If they did so, he was bound to fire.

The merry little crew rowed on, laughing, not believing a word he said.

The sentry, lowering his rifle, repeated his warning.

It was received with laughter as before.

For the third time the sentry warned them; bringing his rifle to the 'Present' in order to emphasis his words.

The boatful of bright faces continued to advance.

The sentry's finger tightened on the trigger: and as it did so, the skiff's bow sank and the stern rose on the top of a wave. There followed a sharp crack which was echoed among the rocks, the deadly whizz of a bullet, and Georgie Colquitt fell forward, to the speechless horror of his companions who were spattered with his

blood. With terror-filled eyes, they gazed at the crimson stream which was flowing into the bottom of the boat, and at the head which was bowed over it. The merry young crew had been stricken dumb and motionless.

At length, one little fellow faltered :

‘Georgie, are you badly hurt? Georgie, Georgie, look up.’

But Georgie never looked up again, for the bullet had struck him full in the centre of the forehead.

It never occurred to his young companions that he was dead; they could not think of such a thing as possible. A bad wound they could understand, but not the sleep that knows no waking. It was the sight of so much blood, which flowed as if it never would stop, that numbed their energies; they felt that Georgie must be

very seriously hurt indeed, and, not daring to lay a hand upon him, they sat there like terrified mice, while the boat rocked to and fro on the sunlit water.

The sentry, a young Irishman, was almost as nerveless as they were. At the inquest afterwards, he said he had aimed above the skiff, but, as already mentioned, it rose at the moment he fired, and the unfortunate boy was sitting above his companions: two things which contributed towards the accident, for such it must be considered. At any rate, the soldier, who was merely obeying orders, was exonerated by the Court from all blame.

The two Quirks who had not heard of the fate of the *Goshawk* and had come to see it, now appeared upon the grassy headland behind. In response to the sentry's call, they descended to the rocks below and

scrambled over the slippery seaweed to the spot where he stood. It took some time to make them understand what had happened, such a catastrophe being quite new to their experience. Before they could rouse themselves to act, they had to take a long hard stare at the boat with its crew of white marble statuettes.

But when it was eventually brought alongside the rocky ledge, partly prepared though they were for the sight that met their gaze, the two great strong fellows who had faced many a gale and lost many a shipmate, began to tremble like women. Only the knowledge that there was work for them to do sustained them. With a glance at one another, they lifted the boys out of the skiff and set them down a few yards away.

‘Get home as fast as you can, my good

lads,' said the elder brother, kindly. 'A walk'll stretch your legs a bit. But mind, don't breathe a syllable to a soul. Leave that to us. Nay, you've no call to be frightened; you're not to blame at all.'

With this comforting assurance, the sincerity of which he did not pause to question, he sent them off, and the white-faced little fellows crept homewards in awed silence, a sad contrast to their merriment at starting.

'This is a dreadful job,' said John Quirk, when he had seen the full extent of the disaster.

'Ay, that it is, John,' returned Thomas.

'Get in, lad. The sooner it's done, the better.'

So they pushed off and rowed the skiff back to the harbour as speedily as possible. Pulling alongside a small schooner, they

borrowed a tarpaulin and laid it over the white young face which had been staring up at the blue sky during the dreary journey. While debating what they should do next, they saw Major Christorey on the quay, and summoned him to their assistance.

He never looked more like a one-armed marionet than he did then, walking by the side of John Quirk as stiffly as if impelled by springs. He treated the brothers as roughly as if they had been to blame: at first refused to believe them; and, when he had peered down into the boat, drew back shuddering, and rattled out his words like bullets.

In order to get rid of some lads who were standing about, he dispatched the whole party for Dr. Mylworry. As for himself, he said he would go at once to

Claddagh House by the Douglas Road. But the Quirks, who had procured a stretcher, were to carry their burden by a back road along the river, and so through a lane terminating in the little recess where the sentry was posted in front of the lodge-gates of Government House. They might thus escape notice altogether, whereas, if they waited for a conveyance, a crowd would be sure to collect. After making these arrangements, Major Christorey departed on his mission, and the Quirks proceeded to follow his instructions.

Short as the lane is, it passes over rather a steep hill. As the two men mounted the one side, Mrs. Colquitt was mounting the other. Poor old lady, her foreboding had been strangely verified. Her imaginary trouble had worried her enough, but

here was a terribly real one advancing upon her.

When the Quirks saw her, they were thunderstruck. It was too late to retreat, for she was quite close to them, and, the narrow lane being still further narrowed by grassy banks climbing up the stone walls on either hand, they could not pass until she moved out of their way. Stepping on to the grass, they stood there with their heads hanging down, and the stretcher between them swaying.

Mrs. Colquitt—who, remember, thought she could read the future—looked with a curious smile at the tarpaulin which covered her dead son. Though a mother's instinct is often placed at an exceedingly high level, far above any rational faculty, it was here altogether at fault. This stout dressy old lady stopped merely because,

being a little out of breath, she considered it a favourable opportunity to rest and talk.

‘What have you got there, Quirk?’ she asked.

‘Nothin’, ma’am, nothin’,’ stammered John Quirk, not daring to raise his eyes from the ground.

‘How can you tell me such a wicked story!’ she said, pleasantly. His answer having given her curiosity a great impetus, she was determined to see what lay beneath that tarpaulin. ‘I hear Mrs. Shimmin is going to give a big dinner. Is she planning some grand surprise? and is it fish for her you have? Come, Quirk, I know it’s fish.’

‘No, ma’am, no.’

‘Then what is it that you make so much mystery about?’

Neither of the brothers answered. They were almost frantic, half-inclined to make a rush past.

‘I declare,’ said Mrs. Colquitt, playfully, advancing towards them, ‘I *will* see.’ And she laid her hand on the tarpaulin.

‘For God’s sake, ma’am, don’t touch it,’ gasped John Quirk. ‘Don’t lay a finger on it. Don’t look, whatever you do. Go right away back to the house, my poor lady, and Heaven help you! for we’ll be after you soon enough.’

‘Aye, go home, do, Mistress Colquitt,’ added Thomas.

She gave them a startled look, and then the awful truth burst upon her. The tarpaulin would not be there if the smallest spark of life remained, and what it covered could only be her son. The stricken mother uttered no cry; showed no

sign of weakness except in her death-like face; but turned and walked quietly on before the two fishermen and their burden. She left the gate open for them to enter after her, and, standing at the sitting-room door so that no one should come out, waited for them in the hall. In a back room sat her husband listening to the pitiful tale which Major Christorey, thinking he had plenty of time, was gently breaking to him. But this she did not know, as she kept guard over the door. When the fishermen went upstairs as she directed, not by speech, but by gesture, she followed, and, as soon as they had set down their burden and departed, tottered in alone to her dead son.

It was the general opinion that Mrs. Colquitt who had been depressing enough before, would henceforth be intolerable.

But the general opinion was completely mistaken, for the suddenness and severity of the shock made her a different woman. From that day, she was seldom heard to utter a complaint, and, though actual cheerfulness was not in her nature, she jealously kept her grief to herself, instead of trying to get others to share it.

Though the mature character is not easily influenced, there was a good reason for the change in Mrs. Colquitt. She had spent the greater part of her married life in pining for a grievance; failing in this, she had industriously manufactured dummies and thrust them in the faces of her family and friends; when the bank failed, she was able to collar her husband and belabour him for what he had never done; but, when Georgie was taken from her, there was a painful gap in her life and nothing

left to her but regret. It was her first sorrow, and she bowed her head beneath the blow. When you hear a man prating in the street about his poverty, do not believe him; a hundred to one he has more money in his pocket than you have. The really poor man hides himself away in his gloomy attic, afraid lest even there a stray sunbeam should detect his shabby clothes. So it was with Mrs. Colquitt, who had flaunted her dummies before the world, but, when trouble actually overtook her, mourned over it in secret and wore a cheerful face in public.

Of course, this did not happen quite at first, for it took her some time to recover from the shock. Not that she had to keep to her bed; there were far too many things to do—such things as she felt must be done under her own superintendence.

Her husband did very little to help her. Sincerely as he lamented the loss of his son, he sat by the fire-side and kept his toes warm. If he were to trot about in the cold, it would not benefit poor little Georgie; there was surely no need to mingle grief with discomfort. So Mr. Colquitt grieved comfortably, huddled in a heap on his chair so as to catch as much heat from the fire as possible. There was nothing heartless about the old fellow; it was merely his way. Whenever his wife entered the room, he watched her furtively as if expecting something unpleasant to follow, for he had led a miserable life since the skeleton incident. But all that was changed now; she was too much engrossed with her trouble to think of nagging at him, and he was agreeably surprised at the gentleness that had come over her.

This could not but re-act upon him. For instance, he once offered to go out in the rain for her, and, instead of sending him, as she used to delight to do, often when there was no occasion for it, she sent Cain the Leg, who at any rate had one less limb in which to get rheumatism.

During the dark days immediately following Georgie's death, Nessie, who had recovered from her illness, was the greatest comfort to her mother. Her old trouble sank into insignificance beside this which had clouded all their lives, and by trying to brighten them she brightened her own. It was but little she could do for them, merely a tender word occasionally, or a gentle touch of the hand, or a sad smile on the pretty pale face; and yet her sweetness and patience worked wonders in that darkened house. She went to and fro

with noiseless tread, trembling as she passed the door of the room in which her little brother lay, but always controlling herself bravely at the sight of her mother and Mona, who managed everything in the calm clear-headed way that sprang from habit.

Briefly, then, the bundle of faggots which had lately been in danger of being broken up, was stronger now than it had ever been before.

Nor was this the only effect of the calamity that had overtaken the family, for it restored to them their lost friends. Every cord that Dalrymple had loosed by the tedious work of months, was in a single day drawn tight again by a force which no rational creature would dream of trying to resist. It was a sudden rush of sympathy for the Colquitts, who were now considered

to have been hardly used, every excuse being made for what had been held as inexcusable, 'their mercenary plot to obtain Diana's money.' The stream flowed here and there and everywhere ; it poured in a flood around the house at the funeral.

An immense amount of importance was formerly attached to a funeral in the island. At the mention of one, there will arise before the eyes of any old Manxman the vision of a gloomy throng gathering from all quarters, wearing a sombre costume, which on a week-day plainly shows their errand. They are collecting to pay the last tribute of respect to the dead ; a thing that no one who has the least acquaintance with the family would neglect to do. From far and near they come, from yonder hills where the smoke from their peat-fires is curling into the air, from the cosy home-

steads scattered about the wavy landscape, from heath-clad glens through which stream-lets rush joyously to the sandy beach, from the quiet town where the vessels in the harbour are flying their flags at half-mast, a motley throng of men and lads, some in carriages, gigs, farmers' carts or shandrydans, others on horseback, and others again on foot; some dressed in ordinary mourning, and others wearing rough tall hats and swallow-tail coats of dark-blue frieze.

One cold January morning, when the bells of St. Mary were tolling their mournful message—Bobby Beg at the ropes, of all people in the world—it was just such a crowd that gathered in front of Claddagh House, only it was swollen by many of the soldiers, who were present at Captain Nugent's request, and also by the officers and crew of the *Goshawk*. If the unfortun-

ate lad had lived to a great age, he could hardly have received as much respect as he did by his early death. The great number of persons of every class who were present gave his mother a strange sort of pleasure; though she did not come downstairs, she knew they were there by the incessant roll of vehicles and the tramp of footsteps on the gravel. She was proud that her Georgie should be so honoured.

All the necessary duties on this occasion were performed by her husband. There was a very dreadful custom of providing cake and wine, and even more substantial food and stronger drinks for those who chose to take them. And, oh! what a sickening sight it was to see men eating and drinking in that gloomy room, while upstairs hearts were being wrung, and eyes were so dim with tears that they could

scarcely take their last look at him they loved !

But at last the hearse, with its waving plumes, slowly moved off, and by degrees the long train got into motion. It passed through the town, and then along the Malew Road. Mrs. Colquitt, drawing aside the blind to press her tear-stained face against the window of the silent house, could just see it, and derived some gratification from its length. And so poor little Georgie went his last journey—‘over the church-stile,’ as the Manx say.

Among those present, there was at least one man sufficiently self-possessed to consider how the event would affect him. This man was Fabian Dalrymple, whose love can be described only as the concentrated essence of selfishness. When he thought of the great expense incurred by

the Colquitts, and their impoverished condition before, he said to himself:

‘It’s the last straw that breaks the camel’s back.’

CHAPTER V.

UPS AND DOWNS.

ONE afternoon in May Mr. Colquitt, wandering into the garden, came upon Cain the Leg, who was limply hanging over his spade.

‘Have you seen any birds’-nests yet?’ asked Mr. Colquitt.

‘Well, no, sir,’ replied Cain the Leg, thoughtfully regarding his master. ‘I’ve never lif’ up my eyes to look for them. But,’ added he, with some idea of turning

an honest penny, 'will you be wantin' any?'

'No, no, it doesn't matter.'

'I can look anyway,' urged Cain the Leg, 'an' maybe I shall fin' some. There's no knowin'.'

'I don't want them,' said Mr. Colquitt, curtly, as he walked away.

Slowly drawing the back of his hand across his mouth, Cain the Leg looked after him.

'Th' oul' boy,' he said to himself, 'is growed a bit quieter o' late, an' the mistress isn't half that cantankerous neither. Well, well, it's an ill win' as blows nobody good.'

Chewing this crumb of comfort, he leaned on his spade and gazed steadily at the ground for another half-hour.

Mr. Colquitt had, stored away in some

dark corner, a collection of birds'-eggs, to which his wife had the strongest objection on account of the cruelty involved in getting them. It was for her sake that he had resisted the present temptation; yet not entirely for hers, also for his own. Now that she no longer worried him without cause, he saw the advantage of not giving offence, and was much more careful in his acts and words. In fact, husband and wife had at last come to see that matrimonial bliss must be founded upon reciprocity.

Morally, then, the situation had greatly improved during the past few months; but, financially, it was nearly as bad as it could be, and the one tended to counteract the other, peace of mind being an excellent sauce for broken victuals. At present Mona was able to shield her parents and

sister a little ; there were many difficulties which, unknown to them, this practical girl resolutely grappled with and overcame ; but the dark future that was looming ahead made her shudder. How were they to meet it ? In despair Mona fell back upon a woman's remedy for every ailment—a wedding. Having already dabbled in the gentle quackery which is so inviting to the fair sex, she proposed to doctor the family with a compound pill of her own manufacture, and this pill was to be the marriage of Nessie and Ned. As for herself, she intended, when her mission was accomplished, to seek for a situation as governess.

When the spring gave way to summer, Mona, having previously ascertained Nessie's objection to marriage, commenced a course of logical treatment. There were

plenty of illustrations ready to her hand. The peasantry took a very business-like view of matrimony, an engagement being often broken off because one side or the other refused to throw in another pig or a sheep. Nessie knew all about this, yet saw nothing wrong in it; she was so accustomed to it that she regarded it as a mere matter of course. Then, asked Mona, how could it be wrong in her case if not in theirs? Was she so very different from the people who belonged to her own race? Was there one standard for them and another for her? If so, where was the line drawn? Besides, she was not asked to marry anybody she disliked; she liked them—Mona was apparently urging her sister to commit bigamy—and they more than liked her, and the rest would certainly follow. Of course, the more love one

took into married life, the more capital one had to draw upon; but then if the balance at the bank should be small at the outset, it could be largely augmented by careful management. Apart from all these considerations, which were entirely personal, there was the welfare of her father and mother to be thought of. Was it not her duty to make some little sacrifice of her own feelings for their sake?

At first Nessie listened to Mona's arguments with absolute pain, but after a time she became so used to them that her mind kept turning them over almost mechanically. During this process they grew like a snowball, until at length her resolution began to yield beneath their weight. When she saw her mother so changed, uncomplainingly carrying her heavy burden, she yearned to do something to gladden

her heart. After all, she kept asking herself was not her objection prompted by selfishness? Mona would never advise her to do what was really wrong. If so—oh, that she could see her way clearly.

There was another influence at work with Nessie. When she witnessed the kindness of everybody, she could not but contrast it with what she was being led to regard as her own hardness of heart. There was Dalrymple, who visited her several times a week and was exceedingly attentive to her mother; and good old Ned who came in sometimes in his own bashful way; and Diana, who had proved herself a true friend in their trouble; and many, many more. And Frank? No, he had not yet been able to reduce himself to the level of an ordinary friend, and so thought it better to hold aloof.

But in another way Frank was decidedly progressing. His successful defence of Clague had brought him a good deal of legal business, and this, strangely enough, had been greatly increased by his share in the rescue of the *Goshawk's* crew, for the young advocate who had risked his life to save others was thought worthy of every encouragement. It became the fashion to engage his services, so he was kept pretty hard at work. He was not only rising in his profession, but also making money. Estimated by the result of the spring months, his income was a very fair one indeed—quite enough for a young married man to live upon. And this was the sting of it, for he had fallen into the dangerous habit of placing each incident as it cropped up—just to see how it would look—in the life he had depicted for himself and Nessie.

It was this that kept him still struggling against his fate, only giving way so very gradually that Diana had almost abandoned hope.

With the improvement of his prospects, Frank tried to induce his uncle to take down the doorplate again and return to his old life of hobbies, comfortable messes, and pleasant naps in the easy-chair. But the old man would not hear of such a thing; now that he had got into harness once more, he was very loth to leave it off. The fact of the matter was, he had made a hobby of his work. He liked to be pottering at something, and, when it brought in a little money, he had the satisfaction of feeling that he was helping the coach forward. Now and again he got something to do, but not very often, for his exertions towards the close of the year had made such a drain

upon his strength that his friends could not venture to trust anything important in his hands. As a rule, the clients that came to him were a queer lot, with queer cases which afforded him immense delight.

One morning there slouched into his office a tall rough country-looking fellow, with a freckled face and bright red hair which had evidently been cropped under a basin. He carried a soft hat in his hand, and, when invited to take a seat, carefully placed it on the chair and sat on it. By the sly way in which he rubbed his chin—shaven, as Jacob noted for future reference—it was clear he thought himself a very funny fellow. He announced himself as John James Kelly.

‘And your business?’ inquired the old advocate, sitting pen in hand.

‘I want the High Bailiff took up,’ replied Kelly.

‘Indeed! Who sent you to me?’

‘Major Christorey.’

Mr. Maddrell chuckled. Here was another fight between those fiery old antagonists. He entered into it with great zest, taking such copious notes that many sheets were soon covered with his illegible scratches, and parting with his new client in the most cordial manner.

Kelly had scarcely left the office when he came running back in a great hurry, his face as white as a sheet.

‘I want to swear the peace agin Dick Clague,’ he said, excitedly.

‘Why?’ said Jacob, stroking his beard with grave surprise, ‘what has he been doing?’

‘Doin’ enough, I reckon. When I got

outside the door, I foun' him waitin' for me, and what should he do but up with his fist and threaten to clout me? He's a dangerous fellow, that. I didn't want to fight him at all, so I just stepped back to swear the peace agin him.'

'But why should he wait for you?'

'He says he buried some money in a fiel' near the win'-mill, an' it's gone an' I took it, he says, which is a lie, for I know nothin' about any money. Likely enough, he was drunk. Anyway, a sober man must have protection agin the like of him.'

Anxious not to goad a desperate man, Jacob counselled gentler measures. Kelly eventually consenting, he went to the door and spoke to Clague who departed scowling.

Whether or not Clague had actually lost

any money as he said, the sum which he had recovered from the bank seemed to have come to an end about this time. Since taking to drink, he had been careless enough about his clothes, but he now degenerated into a dreadful scarecrow, his gaunt figure being hung about with dirty rags, with a flaming face set on top. Moreover, instead of frequenting the inside of public-houses, he was more often seen standing about the outside, his eyes having that wolfish look which is so frequently caused by a craving for drink.

‘It would be a good thing,’ said Jacob afterwards to Frank, ‘if we could get him shut up in Castle Rushen as a lunatic.’

‘He’s scarcely that, uncle.’

‘Well, I don’t know. I would sooner think of a man’s head being wrong than his heart. The worst of the law is, it

never acts until too late. We saw Clague drifting into crime before——’

‘Then you think he murdered Macdonald?’

‘The law acquitted him,’ replied the old man, quietly. ‘And here he is clearly drifting towards a bad end, and yet we have no power to stop him.’

Frank would gladly have assisted the man to whom he was indebted for his rise in the world, but all his efforts in this direction had been fruitless. When he gave money, it was accepted without gratitude and spent in drink; and any other offer was always indignantly and indeed fiercely declined, the previous gifts having established, as Clague was pleased to think, a claim upon the donor. Diana had also exerted herself to help him, but with no better success. He had become a nuisance

to the whole town, yet no one knew how to get rid of him.

However, the end was near at hand. When next he appears, it will be for the last time and at the lowest level to which a human being could possibly sink.

CHAPTER VI.

TYNWALD DAY.

ON Tynwald Day, the 5th of July, there was, as usual, a great gathering at St. John's, which is about three miles from Peel. From every part of the island people went on foot, on horseback, and in vehicles of every kind, to hear the promulgation of the laws which the Keys had passed during the year.

It was a blazing hot morning, yet nobody seemed to mind that. Carriages

rattled by, full of eager faces. Farmers jogged along in their carts, their families sitting behind, all evidently enjoying the sunshine. Stalwart fishermen strode along the dusty roads in twos and threes, seldom slackening their pace unless it were to take a drink at a brook. Here was a young mother carrying her baby in her arms; there, a quaint old married couple hobbling on together by the aid of two sticks apiece; and yonder, a merry-andrew standing on his head, to the delight of a group of lads who rewarded him with an occasional copper. Everybody was going in the same direction.

Shortly before noon the encircling mountains—the precipitous Slieu-Whallin quite close at hand—looked down upon a grassy plain thronged with people. The numerous stalls and booths on the common which

was intersected by roads, suggested a fair rather than a solemn State ceremony, a relic of the distant time when the Norsemen ruled the island. Indeed, there were many signs of festivity ; hampers in nearly every carriage, flasks at many a mouth, and so on.

In the midst of the crowd rose a mound called Tynwald Hill, constructed in three platforms to represent the three estates, and supposed to have been originally composed of earth brought from each of the seventeen parishes. It was now surmounted by a tent over which floated the royal standard. The circular summit of the hill was covered with a carpet, and on it was placed a chair for the Lieutenant-Governor, who was at this moment attending service at St. John's Church opposite. The steps of the church were strewn with

green rushes—an ancient custom by which certain land was held rent free—and the entrance was connected with Tynwald Hill by a double row of soldiers.

Presently, along this lane came the procession, consisting of the coroners carrying their wands of office; the captains of parishes; the clergy; the High Bailiffs; the Keys, Major Christorey marching stiffly among them; the Bishop, the Deemsters, and the rest of the council; Captain Nugent bearing the sword of state; and finally the Lieutenant-Governor.

When they had all taken their places within the space roped off for them around the hill, the coroner of Glenfaba ‘fenced the Court,’ or proclaimed silence. After which, the senior Deemster, standing by the side of his excellency’s chair and looking as if he would have preferred an un-

brella to a wig, proceeded to read out the laws in English and Manx.

As a matter-of-fact, however, the people thought the Deemster far less interesting than the cheap-jacks. They were even irreverent enough to like looking at the merry-andrews better than at the Lieutenant-Governor. Though there was a brightening of faces at the sound of their native tongue, the majority did not care a button about this part of the business ; and were not sorry when, the procession returning to the church for the discussion of certain legislative measures, they were once more at liberty. Then they flocked back to watch their favourites, to wander through the stalls full of tempting things for sale, and to enter the booths containing monstrous men and women. Did the hardy Norsemen do this ? There can be little

doubt they did, unless humanity has greatly changed.

Released from his duties, Dalrymple approached the block of vehicles on the side of Tynwald Hill remote from the booths. Hampers were being unpacked, and the popping of corks mingled with the hum of voices and frequent laughter. The conversation showed that the carriages belonged not to one party, as a stranger might have supposed, but to four corresponding to the four towns, between which there existed a good deal of jealousy.

It was very amusing to watch the faces of the young ladies of Douglas, Ramsey, and Peel, as they saw their admirers slinking away to surround a Castletown carriage.

‘Who is she?’ asked an English lady, who was paying a visit to a Mrs. Mylrea, a

married friend with marriageable daughters, living near Douglas.

‘Don’t you know? oh, dear me, a horrid creature. Inveigled a foolish young advocate into marrying her. Pretended she was dying, and, when she had him fast, came to life again. There’s artfulness for you. He won’t live with her, and no wonder.’

‘And where is he?’

‘I saw him a short time ago wandering among the crowd by himself. Poor fellow, he leads an awful life.’

‘She seems very pretty.’

‘Pretty!’ exclaimed Mrs. Mylrea, with the utmost scorn. ‘A black-eyed doll without a particle of expression! You call her pretty because the men run after her. But, dear me, they always go like sheep when there are plenty of good things to

eat and drink, and they can get them there. Just look at the champagne! I never did see such extravagance.'

'Who is the old lady by her side?'

'Her mother. Decked out like a gipsy! Fancy that Indian shawl and gorgeous jewelry on a day like this! that's Castle-town fashion, I suppose.'

She stopped suddenly and turned very red in the face, for she saw Frank standing, hat in hand, by the side of the carriage. He had been trying to attract her attention for some little time, but she had been too engrossed in watching Diana to notice him until now.

'Oh, how do you do, Mr. Maddrell?' she said, with a desperate plunge.

'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Mylrea,' said Frank awkwardly, 'but I couldn't help catching some of your words, for I was

talking to a friend close by. You were speaking of Mrs. Maddrell; would you kindly remember she is my wife?’

‘Oh, certainly—if you wish it.’

‘Thank you,’ said Frank. And, raising his hat, he walked away.

‘His wife indeed!’ said the injured lady, in an undertone. ‘And yet he never lives with her! Does he remember it himself?’

If Mrs. Mylrea’s logic showed a womanly habit of revolving on its axis in a remarkably short space of time, her censure was natural enough. Frank knew what she was saying as certainly as if he had heard it. He was angry with himself for having spoken at all, a thing he could seldom help doing when his feelings were stirred, though it invariably ended in self-reproach.

It was the first time he had publicly claimed Diana as his wife, but then it was also the first time he had heard a word said against her. He now saw that he was causing her a positive injury by remaining apart from her. The thought vexed him exceedingly, and yet he could not quite prevail upon himself to shatter his cherished idol and live the life that had been mapped out for him. If only Diana had not deceived him, he could have borne himself dutifully, but, as it was, ought he to reward the wrong-doer? He stood on the brink and waited for a push to send him over.

So while she sat in her carriage, the beautiful Tehi-Tegi with the smile-lit face and silvery accents which drew all men to her feet, and never once faltered to show what a sad heart and desolate life were hers,

Frank wandered alone among the crowd and looked at her from a distance, just as one dark night he had lingered outside the High Bailiff's brilliantly lighted house and looked through the window at Nessie. Surely, the divided existence led by this husband and wife was as strange as it was pitiable!

Dalrymple, making his way among the carriages, saw Frank moving off and gave him a friendly nod. He had never got on very intimate terms with 'the choleric islander,' as he used to call Frank; there was a remarkable embarrassment about his manner when the two were together; but he had long abandoned any attempt to create irritation. Indeed, he would have spoken now had not Frank seemed to be in a hurry.

Passing Diana's carriage with a formal

bow, Dalrymple arrived at an old family coach containing Mrs. Christorey and Nessie side by side, and Mona opposite, the two girls being dressed in black, a trying colour in a hot sun. It was their first appearance at any sort of gaiety since Georgie's death.

The major, who had planned this little picnic for Ned's benefit, had with difficulty persuaded them to come; and had not his duties detained him in the church he would have been annoyed to see how little Ned availed himself of his opportunities. Another cause of annoyance would have been the presence of Dalrymple whom he cordially detested, and who would certainly have kept away if the major had been there. Mrs. Christorey was helpless in the matter. She did not approve of her husband's attempts at match-making, and in

any case would not have thought it right to scare away an eligible suitor approved by the girl's family.

Mona, also bent on match-making, was quite in despair about Ned. He sat on a box most of the time and seldom spoke except to Toby. Though active enough at lunch-time, he scarcely even glanced at Nessie, and, when Dalrymple arrived, abandoned her to him with apparent content. Afterwards Mona proposed a walk to see what was going on, but here again she was foiled, for Ned attached himself to her, so that Nessie and Dalrymple were necessarily brought together. As the gentle lady, sitting in the carriage, looked after the retreating couples, her expression was sad and pensive. She knew her son's heart, and grieved for him as only a mother can do.

After a minute or so the couples got separated, as always seems to be the way ; yet that handsome young officer in scarlet, towering head and shoulders above the crowd, with the sweet little girl in black by his side, was a sufficiently remarkable object.

As they threaded their way among the people, they heard a voice singing merrily,

‘ The king can only drink his jough,
And I can do the same ;
I drinks mine off without a cough,
And that’s the for I came.’

Of course, the singer was Bobby Beg, in his usual fantastic costume. He was sure to be found in attendance upon Dalrymple, a fact not very noticeable owing to the fondness which he had always displayed for the military. He was dancing with a

mug in his hand, and appeared merrier than ever, which was not very surprising, for a little beer went a long way with him.

Alongside, a half-broken young horse, decked with ribbons to show it was for sale, was being trotted up and down, while a group of farmers discussed its merits. A lad, grinning from ear to ear at his own wit, gave Bobby Beg a push and sent him against the horse, which began to plunge and back, clearing a circle with its heels. In doing so, it came into dangerous proximity with Nessie, who found herself wedged in between a fisherman and an old countrywoman with a big basket. Dalrymple, immediately behind, could do nothing to help her, for he was as tightly packed into the crowd as she was.

The young man in charge of the horse

seemed to have lost his wits. He dragged at its head and hammered it with a stick, with the only result of making it plunge the more. It worked gradually back until it was opposite the frightened girl, who could do nothing but stare at it. If it kicked again, it could not fail to reach her; and, with a sudden overpowering shock of horror, she saw it was going to kick.

Dalrymple saw it, too. Looking round desperately, he caught sight of the old woman's basket. As quick as thought he snatched it from her and held it before Nessie, which his great height enabled him to do with ease. At the same moment the horse let out with its heels. The spectators watched breathless and then burst into a cheer, for the blow was received by the basket, and, the crowd giving way behind,

Dalrymple was enabled to drag Nessie out of further danger.

‘Oh, Mr. Dalrymple,’ panted Nessie, ‘how can I thank you?’

‘Some day, perhaps, I’ll tell you,’ he replied, looking right into the hazel eyes.

The blood rushed back into her white face and she drew away the hand which he had thoughtlessly retained. Though the act itself was the reverse of encouraging, there was something in her gentle way of doing it that made him glow with pleasure.

‘It was so brave, so clever of you,’ she said, hastily.

‘I’m afraid you think too highly of me, Miss Nessie.’

‘Oh, but I couldn’t do that. I mean—you know what I mean. I’m quite sure the

dreadful animal would have killed me but for you.'

'Oh, dear, no,' he said, carelessly. And then, not wishing to damage his own cause, he added: 'I daresay we should have managed to escape without injury in any case.'

'I did feel so frightened,' said Nessie, shuddering. 'I can never, never thank you enough, and I know Mona will say the same when she hears of it. There she is. Mona! Mona! And see, here comes the old woman with the broken basket.'

A gift of a sovereign gained for him the woman's outspoken gratitude and raised him still higher in Nessie's estimation.

After this incident Dalrymple felt sure that his success was merely a question of time, if only he could afford to wait for it. Herein lay the difficulty. Anxious as he

was not to spoil his chance by precipitation as Ned had done, there was a thorny secret goading him onward. For the last six months he had lived in a state of anxiety and suspense, not free from occasional self-reproach. He knew he was treading on a mine which might be exploded at any moment, to the destruction of all his hopes and stratagems; and perhaps the worst part of his torture was that, if he had acted like an honest man, his hand should have exploded it long ago. He could not do that; he had gone too far to retreat; he must advance.

And yet he had to advance at a snail's pace, as he saw with a fever of impatience. To him the changes that were taking place in Nessie's mind were as plain as the pages of a book. Day after day he watched her and helped her in the way he wished her to

go. He saw her liking for him gathering strength under the influence of gratitude and kindly attention ; her objections to marriage yielding before Mona's arguments, and her readiness to consent to the wishes of her family growing rapidly at the sight of her mother's resignation. When these feelings should have matured, he intended to stretch forth his hand to grasp his prize. .

It has often been observed that noteworthy events are gregarious. Though the connection may not always be easy to see, they come 'in battalions.' It is like a landslip ; the mass of loose earth and stones descending a little way at first, then waiting a while to descend again, and after a final pause crashing into the valley with a force that carries everything before it.

How far this was true of Castletown

remains to be seen. But towards the close of September a series of more or less exciting events brought matters to an unexpected crisis, and forced Dalrymple to act at once.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAINED TO A ROCK.

‘THERE are only two faults I find in you, Frank,’ said his uncle, clasping his hands after dinner and leaning back in the bow-window-like chair to turn those grave pale blue eyes of his upon his nephew. ‘One is, that you won’t live with your wife; and the other, that you will persist in shaving off the gift of Providence. Now,’ added the old man, who apparently considered the latter sin the more heinous of the two,

‘leaving the Scriptural argument out of the question, for that seems to have little weight with you, let us look at the practical advantages of a beard. I have just been reading some statistics on the subject. It is found that in all metal-works the men who wear beards live far the longest. Why? Because the small particles of metal, instead of entering their mouths and poisoning their lungs, are arrested by the hairs which Providence has given them for that purpose. Get over that if you can, Frank! Then again there are very few consumptive patients with beards. Why? Because wise men retain the natural protection for their throats, but fools—— Goodness gracious, what’s the meaning of that uproar in the kitchen?’

‘Cook besieged by rats, I suppose,’ replied Frank.

‘Then I must go to her assistance,’ said Jacob, trotting off in the direction whence the shrieks proceeded.

Frank left the house in a very unsettled mood. It was not the first allusion his uncle had lately made to the relations between husband and wife, and the fact that on each occasion he had glanced off from the subject immediately, showed how much he was troubled about it. Why not put an end to it all? Well, it was awkward to take the first step, and then there was that tyrant, public ridicule. So, altogether, Frank’s ideas would not come right.

It was a dark and blustry afternoon, with black masses of cloud, tossing in the blue ocean overhead. The tide being low, the bay looked inexpressibly dreary: a greyish-green monster which ever and anon

showed its gleaming fangs and with a ceaseless moan roamed up and down the shore like a famished wolf, turning over the seaweed on the reefs and diving into the gulleys in the vain search for a belated sunbeam.

Leaving the town, Frank walked along the beach towards Langness. When he reached the strip of rough grass-land where races were once run for 'a plate of the value of five pounds sterling (the fashion included),' he happened to look across the bay at Scarlett, and the old lime-kiln there reminded him of an anecdote which seemed not inapplicable to his own case.

It related to the days of the seventh Earl of Derby, the one who instituted the races. 'Stanlagh Mooar,' or the Great Stanley, as the Manx call the unfortunate nobleman who was executed at Bolton-le-Moors,

appointed as his lieutenant a certain John Greenhaugh. Distressed at the poverty of the farmers and their ignorant way of farming, this energetic Governor had a lime-kiln built in order to show them how to improve their lands. When the news of this strange thing got abroad, the people came in crowds from every part of the island to see rocks burning like peat; and then, thinking they had discovered a speedy way of converting their patches of bog or mountain into fertile fields, they rushed back to their homes and made 'earth-pots' everywhere. But, instead of using limestone, they threw in blocks of basalt and schist and sandstone, and whatever else they could lay their hands on; and were startled out of their wits because these obstinate rocks refused to turn white like the Governor's. There was clearly some-

thing wrong here. John Greenhaugh was a wizard, without doubt, the fairies had changed his rocks and would not change theirs. Plague take the little things! Thus argued the puzzled old Manxmen, who, by the way, seemed to have been much more hasty in their conclusions than their descendants are.

It was just such a fairy that Frank wanted. If she would come to him, and, with a wave of her magic wand, whiten the stubborn rocks, how pleasant it would be! But he had a suspicion that he had been using basalt instead of limestone. To do any good with that limestone of his ought he not to turn the whole lot out and refill the kiln?

Arrived at Langness, Frank went down on the shore and potted about near the water's edge. A low reef on each side of

him formed a lane to the sea, which was rising rapidly beneath the lash of the wind. Lifting up the fringe of long brown seaweed hanging from the rock, Frank discovered a hole which at once suggested a crab.

‘I’ll have him out,’ said Frank, tucking up his sleeves.

The hole was about level with his shoulder and just wide enough to admit his hand. When investigated, it turned out to be pretty deep. Frank pushed his arm in as far as it would go, when he suddenly winced and changed colour.

‘Instead of getting him,’ he said, ‘Mr. Crab has got me.’

Except perhaps a shrimp, there is no creature more perverse than a crab, as its absurd gait testifies. A cautious old fisherman like Jonathan Vondy would never

dream of trying to persuade it with any softer argument than an iron hook, but careless young fellows like Frank frequently use their hands—sometimes to the detriment of their symmetry. The pitcher that has gone many a journey to the well, has always been pointed at as a foolhardy utensil, certain to come to a bad end.

The occupant of the hole, an immense crab, had taken Frank's invitation to come out, in a very unfriendly spirit. It had nipped him by the wrist, and, as it had previously wedged itself sideways, it evidently meant to stay where it was. There was no chance of dragging it out; and none, as everyone acquainted with this tenacious species will admit, of its relaxing its hold. If a finger had been seized, instead of a large object like the wrist, more harm would have been done. As it

was, the pain, though severe, was quite endurable.

So far Frank saw no cause to be alarmed about his position. It was decidedly unpleasant, of course, and rather ignominious, but nothing more. If he could attract the notice of somebody, it would be easy enough to get away with no worse damage than a lacerated wrist. But where was that somebody? Carefully as he scanned Langness, the race-course, and the bleak stretch of rocks around, he could not see a single person. Across the bay, opposite yonder row of white-washed cottages, or peeping above the sea-wall in front of Claddagh House, a few moving figures were just visible, but they were much too far away to be of any use. Well, he must wait; somebody would be sure to come along presently.

Frank had scarcely arrived at this conclusion when a gust of wind carried his hat off, and, as he looked after it, he experienced a sudden shock of horror. The sea was rapidly approaching! Long before high tide, the reefs on either side would be under water. There was a savage glee in the way in which the waves advanced, tumbling over one another in their eagerness to get at their victim. Out yonder they fought with one another for want of anything better to do; but here in this narrow passage they swept onward with a cruel determined purpose which made Frank shudder. Now they were splashing about his feet, shaking the seaweed as a terrier shakes a rat; now, they had reached his knees; higher and higher they rose until, tottering beneath their blows, he suffered fresh agonies from his wounded

hand. When one is warm and comfortable, it is easy to be brave and hopeful; but Frank, chilled to the bone, began to feel something very like despair, as his eyes vainly searched the land for assistance.

As the blood-red sun sank in the west, an angry glare of crimson shot across the sky, and the hill-tops blazed as if the beacons had been kindled which used to announce the approach of the dreaded rover, Phynn McCowle. Very shortly after sunset, however, the bright colours faded, leaving a sombre grey with smudgy masses of black. It was the commencement of a stormy evening. The wind went by with a mocking scream; the clouds scudded rapidly overhead; and the sea danced in cruel sport around its victim who alone appeared motionless, bound helplessly to the rock.

Should the worse come to the worst, Frank had decided to make a desperate attempt to tear off his hand. But not yet; no, he could not do that until the very last moment—not until the water had risen so high that he must get away or be drowned. He selected first one level and then another, always a little higher each time. Even now a wave sometimes broke over his head. But, gasping for breath, he told himself he would not do it yet—he would wait a few moments longer.

At such a time, some strange thoughts come into one's head. Among other things, it occurred to Frank that his death would solve not only his own difficulties but also those of his friends. When he was gone, Nessie would have no reason for remaining single; Ned would have nothing to restrain him from asking her to become

his wife, which she would be sure to do ; and Diana would be released from a husband who could never love her. Would she marry again ? He did not think so. As he looked into that wonderful and indeed almost inconceivable future which was to exist after his death, he always saw Nessie married and Diana single. The former of these visions was too painful to contemplate long ; the latter was distinctly pleasurable. This was very selfish of him, no doubt ; yet has not many a better man found such thoughts passing through his mind ? The marriage knot was so very, very nearly broken that Frank, looking back before he had to take the final leap, felt he might admit that he still loved Nessie.

No starving man ever looked into a baker's shop with a fiercer craving than gleamed from Frank's eyes as he turned

them for the last time upon the grim rocks and grassy headland behind. Like some huge polypus, the relentless sea was flinging its many arms around him and gradually drawing him down into its capacious maw, only his head and shoulders being visible now. The hoarse laughter of the *cughtagh*, or cave-spirit, came to him on the wind which was rising every minute, and the waves splashed scornfully in his face and hissed in his ears. It was clearly time to do something if he would save his life, but what a dreadful something it was !

Suddenly his heart almost stopped beating ; for there, on Langness, stood a woman. So great was his excitement that when he tried to call out, he could not do so, and, as he struggled with his voice, a wave passed over him and hid her from him.

Then ensued a wild conflict between hope and despair. Would she be there when next he looked? Yes, there she was, distinct enough in the twilight. But, even if she came to him, how could she help him?

Loudly as he shouted, his voice sounded as a feeble wail amid that strife of wind and water. Yet she heard it and started; gazed this way and that; and finally noticing the hand he was waving, paused but a moment before she hurried down the cliff and began to run across the slippery rocks as if she was used to them.

Frank, watching her with desperate eagerness, wondered at her intelligence no less than at her speed. But, as she came nearer, his wonderment vanished, for he recognised Diana, whose journey along the beach on the night of the Wattersons'

dance flashed into his mind, just as it had already flashed into hers.

Diana had lately taken to wandering about the coast by herself. Between her fits of feverish gaiety, she also seemed to find a sense of relief in the companionship of the sea. Though the purpose which subsequently developed itself had not yet assumed any definite shape, it was doubtless forming without her volition. Sitting sometimes on the rocks at Scarlett and sometimes at Langness, she would watch the passing vessels as if they might be bringing her some welcome message. But alas, they all went down to their haven under the sea, and left her in bitter loneliness. Was there no way of escape out of all this misery? Diana had spent many and many a weary hour in pondering this question.

‘Frank!’ she panted, kneeling on the reef above him. ‘Oh, Frank, why do you stand there?’

‘Because I can’t help myself,’ he replied, with a feeble smile. ‘Have you got’—Here he disappeared beneath a wave which made Diana, heedless of her wet garments, clutch at him as if not even the cruel sea should tear him from her. He came up gasping. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ he said. ‘There’s no harm done yet. Have you a parasol? No. Then could you find a stick—or something to crush a big crab—which has got hold of my hand?’

Diana stood up shuddering. With her hands tightly clasped over her breast, she glanced first at the water and then at the solitary farm-house on Langness as if calculating the distance.

‘Can you wait ten minutes?’ she asked, in a quick low voice.

‘Yes, Diana, I think so.’

‘Then good-bye, dear, I’ll be back in plenty of time.’

Without another word she was gone, running over the rocks with long swift strides which never faltered or made a false step. Her mere presence had produced a wonderful change in Frank’s feelings, it had seemed so impossible to die when he was speaking face to face with her. But as she rapidly grew more distant, and the tumbling tossing waves came pouring around and over him, hope again sank to a very low ebb.

Diana possessed the power of concentrating her thoughts and energies upon the task of the moment. In consequence, whatever she did, was done well. She

appeared to skim along the beach like a lapwing. Though the rocks were very slippery with seaweed, she invariably selected the safest spots, and, swiftly as she ran, she never lost her footing ; though the wind beat fiercely against her as if it had entered into a league with the sea to encompass Frank's destruction, she held resolutely on her way without ever pausing to take breath. The cliff was easy enough to ascend in places ; she aimed at a grassy slope and soon reached the top. At the farmhouse she did not hesitate at the door, but rushed without knocking into the tiled kitchen.

The family were sitting at supper around a table covered by a cloth of home-spun linen. An elderly man in his shirt-sleeves was at one end ; his stout ruddy-face wife, opposite ; on one side were two girls barely

in their teens ; and on the other, two boys a little older. They all laid down their knives and forks and stared in amazement at the beautiful lady, with the flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, who stood panting in the doorway. Her dress, they noticed, was very wet. Had she been shipwrecked this stormy evening? Or, had she fallen from the rocks into the water? Or, was she a poor mad thing who had tried to commit suicide? Or, could she be Ben Varrey who had been singing in the waves all day? When they heard the sweetness of her voice, they thought she must be Ben Varrey.

‘A stick!’ gasped Diana, ‘I want a stick. Can you let me have a stick at once?’

‘Ay, surely,’ replied the farmer, after taking a good look at her. ‘Now, what

kind of a stick is it that you would be wantin' ?'

'But won't you come in?' asked his wife, rising to dust a chair with her apron. 'Come in an' sit down, do! 'Deed, but you look dreadful wet, an' there's a cheerful fire here an' all. Would you like a glass o' *cowree*?*' Or, perhaps you'd rather have a sup o' butter-milk? Ellen, run and fetch a jug for the lady. Go, girl, at once? Never min' tyin' up your hair at all.'

Diana had let her wander on because any attempt to stop her would have led to endless discussion. If she would avoid a fatal delay she saw that she must act on her own account, for these good people did not know the meaning of haste. So,

* Infusion of oatmeal.

instead of listening, she had been scanning the room for what she wanted, and, just as the woman finished, noticed a stout gorse-stick standing by the side of the dresser. Darting across the floor, she pounced upon it, and, before they could recover from their surprise, had vanished. Decidedly, they concluded as they gazed at one another's astonished faces, it was Ben Varrey they had seen.

When Diana got back to Frank, she found him nearly exhausted. His head being only just above the level of the water, every wave passed over him and stopped his breathing. The sight of that pale worn face looking with desperate eagerness out of the surging water, while the wind went screaming by along the desolate shore and the dark clouds scurried past overhead, would surely have moved

the stoniest heart; but for the woman who loved him with all the love of her passionate nature, it was terrible. Now that her task was done, she could scarcely prevent her strength from slipping away from her. Without wasting a moment in talking—of which, indeed, she was then incapable—she gave him the stick.

He worked it into the hole until the end was in contact with the crab, then gave a scrunching push, and his arm was free. When he had drawn it out, which cost him some trouble, it was so numbed, he found a huge claw still adhering to his maimed wrist. He put it in his pocket as a memento of the occasion. Far too weak to climb up the rock, he had to push his way through the water, and, as he struggled to the dry land, the white waves hissed around him with baffled spite and the

wind tossed his wet hair about, screaming at him the while like an indignant virago.

Frank knew the man who lived in the farm-house. So he and Diana dragged themselves up there and sat by the fire-side, while the family stood in a semi-circle around and listened, with open eyes, mouths, and ears, to the story of Frank's adventure. For an advocate, said the farmer to himself, he was a remarkably incautious young person. But his wife brimmed over with pity; every other moment she despatched one of her sons or daughters to fetch some fresh article of food or drink 'to keep the couth out.'

It was dusk when husband and wife walked home together, and there was every promise of a dark and stormy evening.

Both were silent for a time. The good fairy had come with her magic wand, and the whole of Frank's obstinacy had vanished.

'Diana,' he said, humbly at length, 'will you forgive me for the injury I have caused you?'

'You, Frank! Will you forgive me? I am the one to blame. It is I, not you, who have wrought all this misery.'

'Well, we won't argue about that. We must try to forget the past.'

'Oh, can we?' cried Diana, eagerly. Never had she loved him more than she did now that she had saved his life, and now that the happiness for which she had so long been yearning seemed to be within reach.

'At least,' replied Frank, with a calmness which jarred painfully upon her

nerves, 'we can try. In future, we can really be husband and wife if you wish it.'

A dreadful doubt had crept into her mind.

'Frank,' she said, scarcely above a whisper, 'do you say that merely out of some idea of gratitude?'

'No.'

'Then what?'

'To-day would be a good starting-point for a new future.'

'Oh, Frank, my husband,' she cried, with uncontrollable anguish, 'can't you spare me a wee morsel of love?'

'I would that I could,' said Frank, from his heart. 'Believe me, Diana, if only we could command our feelings, I should readily, gladly give all my love to you, to whom I owe my very life. Why do you

make me say what must pain you? You would not have me tell you a lie, I know. Is it not enough that I recognise my duty? Confronted with what you once called an accomplished fact, I am quite ready to submit. Diana, I like you very much; won't that satisfy you?'

'Very well, Frank,' said Diana. But she spoke as if she was broken-hearted, and turned her beautiful face away, it was so ghastly white.

As she did so, she caught sight of a figure skulking through the gloom. They had just reached the race-course, and by the side of the path lay a cluster of gorse-bushes. It was here that she saw the man, moving as if he did not wish to be seen. With her keen eyes, however, she had little difficulty in recognising Clague, whom she had once regarded as

some slight link between her and Frank.
He stooped down behind a hillock and she
saw him no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HUMAN SPIDER.

LANGNESS, together with its connective strip of greensward, the race-course, may be likened, not to a nose, as the name implies, but to one of those Manx Three Legs, the sole of the foot being turned towards the open sea and the instep enclosing the bay. Then the toes will be represented by the Skerranes; the ball by Dreswick Point, a dangerous reef jutting out at right angles; and the spur on the heel by the tiny St.

Michael's Isle with its narrow causeway at the eastern extremity of Derbyhaven Bay, which is separated from Castletown Bay only by the race-course, the leg.

‘The back o’ Langish,’ as the country-people call the seaward side of the promontory, may be described as an enormous but very irregular chevaux-de-frise. The schist, after having been thrown on end by volcanic agency, has been worn into a succession of deep gulleys and sharp reefs like immense hatchet-blades, which are inclined towards the sea at every imaginable angle. Such an inhospitable demonstration could not be equalled by the most truculent porcupine. To add to the confusion of the scene, large boulders are scattered about the coast, so that the whole forms a very efficient protection against the attacks of the sea. But in case of necessity

there is a powerful reserve in the background; for, peeping out of their beds of turf and gorse and heather, are legions of sleepy old lichen-stained rocks ready to do their duty should their outposts fall before the thunder of the waves. In the centre of this medley stands a tall circular tower, some distance beyond the farm-house. The mountains being drawn up in array on the other side of the bay, this solitary structure reminds one of a colonel inspecting his regiment.

At nine o'clock on the night of Frank's adventure there was a wild sea raging outside Langness. The confused mass of breakers with their white manes flying in the wind resembled a stampede of maddened horses over the prairie, and, as they hurled themselves upon the rocks, they drowned for the moment the shrill voice of the gale. Though there was nothing to

brighten this scene of terror, the grandeur of the storm was magnificent. The sky was laced with black bands of cloud, and sometimes, it is true, the moon peeped through the bars of her prison ; but, seeing the turmoil below, started back in affright and fled.

An hour later the whole sky was pitch-black and a thick curtain had been drawn over the angry face of the sea as if it were too fearful to look upon. There was also an occasional splash of heavy rain, but as yet it was not nearly so wetting as the showers of spray which swept half-way across the promontory. The mist, winding around the rocks, gave them a remarkably weird aspect ; they appeared to be writhing in agony, assuming all manner of hideous shapes.

In one of the grassy nooks near Dres-

wick Point a man was hewing at a stranded spar with a hatchet which he had brought with him. He had been engaged in this occupation for some considerable time, and a large pile of wood was lying on the ground. A lantern, set in a heap of stones, showed him to be a tall, gaunt fellow with very ragged clothes. Though he worked at his task with a fierce impatience, as if every moment was of the utmost importance, he occasionally cast a hungry glance at the sea. Before the mist had closed around, a smack had gone by, labouring heavily under small jib and double-reefed mainsail, and he had glared at her like a wild beast disappointed of its prey. After that, he had worked harder than ever.

On one side of the grassy nook there was a huge slab of schist which had been

undermined by rabbits. Many burrows diverged from a common entrance at the bottom of the slab, so that it formed quite a large and convenient hall. The wood-cutter, however, had used it as a cupboard. When he had broken up as much of the spar as he required, he went to the slab, inserted his hand underneath, and drew out a quantity of ling and paper, both perfectly dry, as he was pleased to observe.

But, a sudden thought striking him, he put it back and clambered up the grassy slope to peer through the mist. If there had been anybody about, he could not have seen them; and who would be on Langness on such a night as this? Nevertheless he looked and listened with his head first on one side and then on the other. Startled by a dark object which appeared to be in motion, he crept forward

to examine it and found it to be merely a rock. At length, he went softly back again as if his footsteps might be heard by some unseen watcher, in spite of the shrieking wind and raging water.

When he had arranged the ling and paper between two slabs which formed an angle facing the sea, he laid some of the wood on top, and, carefully sheltering the lantern beneath his tattered coat, opened it and so set the pile alight. Fanned by the wind, it burned furiously. The ling crackled, the wood caught the flame, there was soon a glorious blaze which neither rain nor spray could quench.

Here and there a rock started out of the night as if it would look more closely into this strange thing. There was quite a circle of these grim and silent spectators who kept at a safe distance, though their

expressions and attitudes were ever changing.

After placing a larger log on the fire, the man sat down on a stone close by, and the light fell full on the haggard features, the unkempt black hair, the heavy brows, and gleaming eyes of Clague. The waves roared on the rocks below and the wind went howling by, but he never stirred a muscle. He looked like some human wolf, though there was more of the human spider in his work this night. Crouching as motionless as a bronze statue, with fists clenched and every limb rigid, he glared at the sea as once by the smithy forge he had glared at Macdonald's house. He was as patient now as he had been then, for he had spun his monstrous web and felt sure there were flies about. He was even more determined, a fierce craving for drink, together with a

consuming hatred of his fellow-men, having driven him to a state of desperation. Was he mad? Let us hope so. Yet he was clearly acting upon the suggestion of the shipwreck at which he had discovered the sailor's chest, with its locket and chain.

Two hours passed by, during which Clague remained in the same crouching posture, only moving occasionally to add fresh fuel to the fire. The stone slabs threw most of the light out to sea; such rays as escaped were caught in the little concave dell behind, which acted as a second and larger reflector. The range of vision was, therefore, limited in every direction but one, and even the edge of that yeasty water, interspersed with black reefs, was very dimly seen. Sometimes a burning brand leaped into the air and sped away into the night, and sometimes as the flames grew

higher, a few more spectators crept into view, to disappear when the fire died down again; otherwise, there was nothing to relieve the monotony of the storm.

Presently a look of alarm came into Clague's face. Shielding his eyes with his hands, he watched and listened intently. There could be no doubt about it; the tide had turned, and the wind and sea were falling with it. A big drop of rain smote him on the cheek and, with an oath, he wiped it away. The drizzling mist was giving way to a steady downpour, which made the fire hiss and sputter and threatened to extinguish it entirely.

Clague, who had moved forward to the edge of the rocks, was about to return when a strange sound met his ears—a sound of bellowing cows and neighing horses somewhere out at sea. As he

watched, an inhuman light leaped into his eyes, for he had caught a glimpse of a large vessel so close to the shore that she could not by any possibility weather the Skerranes. Indeed, it seemed all but certain she would strike on Dreswick Point. Though under very short canvas, she went by rapidly, ploughing her way through the heavy seas, and the bellowing and neighing were soon lost amid the din around.

After extinguishing his fire for fear of accidents, Clague mounted the grassy platform behind and went after her. Though he strode along at a tremendous pace, he was only just in time to see the last of the vessel.

She had gone ashore on Dreswick Point, broken her back, and was sinking, one half going down into each of the two gulleys

which ran alongside the reef. As she parted in the centre, there came out of the broken ends a struggling mass of cows, horses, pigs, and sheep. It looked just as if she had swallowed them alive, and had been compelled to disgorge them by being torn asunder. After all trace of the hull had disappeared, they came floating to the surface out of the two whirlpools. The sea around was strewn with them. Some were carried away by the tide ; others were hurled upon the sharp rocks which soon resembled a butcher's shambles.

In no case could the crew have had much chance ; but, amid that confusion of heavy animals and floating spars, they were helpless. They were all drowned except one man who escaped by a mere freak of the sea. A wave flung him on to a ledge far above high-water mark, and

there he remained insensible for a while. We shall see him again, but not just yet.

The first thing Clague got hold of was a hen-coop full of fluttering fowls; he contemptuously tossed it back into the water. The next was a keg of whisky which made his eyes glisten. He carried it to a more sheltered spot, and, lying face downwards, knocked the bung in and applied his mouth to the hole. This was surely the act of a lunatic. Some men do, it is true, drink raw spirits by the glass, but their sanity may fairly be questioned.

Each time Clague drew his mouth away, he tried to stop the flow of liquid with his hand, but, in spite of all his efforts, a little pool four or five inches deep was formed in a hollow of the rock. Gradually his face sank into it; the rain poured down upon

him, but he did not move; he was found there in the morning, dead.

After a storm comes a calm. So let us jog along more pleasantly, taking an elevated standpoint to view the scenery brightened by sunshine.

In the seventeenth century it was ordained by act of Tynwald that the gates of Castle Rushen should not be unlocked in the morning 'until the watchman ringe the day bell, which was to be done so soone as the watchman could pfectli discover the land markes bounded within a mile and a half' of the Castle. And at Peel still more stringent precautions were enforced 'for more saufe guard of that castle, being nearer to our enemies the Redshankes.'

This morning, when the sun rose in a cloudless sky, the thin veil of vapour caught fire and was speedily consumed,

while the scenery far and wide came before the eye like the dissolving views of a magic lantern. Had the watchman 'gone about the walles to looke that all things be cleere,' he would have been able to distinguish the cottages away on the mountain-side, the little hamlet of Cregneish embedded among the Mull hills at the extreme south of the island, and even to trace the purple curves of Greeba and Garraghan and Bein-y-Phot in the far north, so clear was the atmosphere after the rain. The pretty patchwork of undulating cornland and meadow, interlaced with the golden lines of the gorse upon the fences, appeared as distinct as if under a microscope. The sunlight, lying in a silvery web upon the landscape, gave to the most commonplace objects a beauty of its own, and the air had a soft shimmer which ever and anon culminated in a

sparkle at some cottage window many miles away.

No less beautiful was the sea. Out yonder by the Skerranes there was a frequent flash of foam, and over the Stack played a cascade of creamy water and the bay seemed to be set with a myriad of gems. It was not still by any means, but there was nothing rough about it this morning. Its anger had given way to a playful petulance most fascinating to watch. The pretty coquette was smiling now, even running coyly before a staid old skiff carrying a fisherman and his lobster-pots.

When the news of the wreck reached Castletown, it created a greater sensation than usual on account of some of the circumstances connected with it. The people went in crowds to visit Dreswick Point.

The sky was blue overhead ; the sunlight was glancing on the sea ; by the side of the reef the water was already so clear that some red bollen might be seen contentedly swimming among the débris. Nature was hard at work, trying to cover up that ugly scar of yesterday.

It could not be done just yet, however ; there were plenty of materials out of which the grim tragedy could be constructed. What had lately been a fine vessel, was found to be churned into match-wood, the fragments being scattered all along the coast. Clague, though dead, told his own tale. It was corroborated by the remnants of his fire, and also by the saved man, a passenger, who had found his way to the farm-house. The bleeding carcasses which covered the rocks, certainly presented a sickening spectacle ; but, as Cain the Leg

and many another has said, 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody no good,' and the poor were provided with enough meat to last them for a long time to come. The only body recovered was an unknown sailor's, all the others having been swept away by the powerful tidal currents.

Among those who started to walk to Dreswick Point, was Fabian Dalrymple, who could now take a feeling interest in shipwrecks. He went by himself, shortly after the conclusion of morning parade. While crossing the race-course, he contrived to stumble into one of the sandy pits with which it is studded, and a few minutes later he missed his pocket-book. He returned to look for it, but could not find it. For a very good reason : Bobby Beg, who had been behind, had pounced upon it and carried it off.

Dalrymple's loss threw him into the greatest consternation. There was only one thing to be done, he decided; he must propose to Nessie at once. He accordingly hastened back to Claddagh House with that object.

CHAPTER IX.

A CRISIS.

DALRYMPLE, having asked to see Nessie alone, was shown into the sitting-room where the circle of friendly old chairs were assembled in solemn conclave to receive him, like a jury empanelled to pronounce upon his case. Though the dark furniture gave the room rather a gloomy aspect, outside the sun was shining brightly on the old apple-tree and the garden beyond. The breeze, that came pouring in through

the open window, was laden with sweet scents, and the birds were singing merrily to the dreamy music of the sea. It was an idyllic morning for love-making.

If Mr. Colquitt, his wife, and Mona who were discussing the matter upstairs, had been able to listen unobserved, they would presently have heard the following conversation.

‘You have been very good to me,’ said Nessie, looking nervously at the little hands which were clasped in her lap, ‘and very good to my mother and father and sister, and I do like you very much. But it’s all so sudden, so strange, and really I don’t know what to say.’

Dalrymple, who was sitting by her side, never once removed his eyes from her pretty blushing face. There was something of the professional critic in his gaze,

and something of the lover. He was undoubtedly anxious, yet showed no sign of the impatience which was consuming him. On the contrary, he appeared remarkably self-possessed.

‘Shall I tell you what to say, Nessie?’ he asked, bending his head until she could feel his breath on her cheek. ‘Say Yes, darling.’

‘Won’t you give me one day—just one day to decide? To-morrow evening, I’ll tell you.’

‘Won’t you tell me now, Nessie?’

‘I would rather not,’ she faltered.

A shade of vexation crossed his face. There was a doubtful ring about her voice which made him hesitate to press her.

‘I can’t bear the uncertainty,’ he said. ‘Only think of my dreadful suspense!’

‘But wouldn’t it be much more dreadful

if I were to decide wrongly? How many might be made miserable! I am anxious to please everybody, and I don't quite know what they wish.'

'Then you don't think of yourself—or me! Won't you love me a little?'

How could she tell him that, having given her heart away to one man, she had but a poor feeble substitute to offer to anybody else? That she could never, never forget her first love? That nothing remained to her but to do what good she could with her ruined life, which might bring some little happiness to others but none to herself? He knew all the circumstances, so there was no need to explain them, and when she gave him her final answer she could add what was necessary as gently as possible.

To this arrangement Dalrymple reluct-

antly consented. After all, no harm might come of the loss of that pocket-book; perhaps some ignorant country lout, who could not read, had picked it up; in any case, he might as well try to recover it, for he could not disown it, his name being in it. He left the house without seeing any of the rest of the family, and, for the sake of greater seclusion, returned to the town by the Silverburn.

The Douglas coach had just arrived and the horses were being brought to cool their hot and dusty legs in the river. Seated on one of them was Bobby Beg, singing like a lark.

‘The king can only ride a hoss,
And I can do the same;
I rides him with my legs across,
And that’s the for I came.’

Bobby Beg appeared to be in a singularly

happy mood. From his lofty seat he looked down upon Dalrymple with proud delight which was made only the more conspicuous by an attempt at slyness.

Remembering that Bobby Beg had been behind on the race-course, Dalrymple eyed him somewhat suspiciously. However, it was not likely this crazy fellow should know anything about the missing pocket-book. So he passed on.

Meeting the chief constable in the market-place, he mentioned his loss and was advised to send the bellman round the town.

‘Where is he to be found?’ asked Dalrymple.

‘In some public-house or other, keeping his throat in good condition.’

‘A thirsty soul then?’

‘Very,’ said the constable, drily. ‘I

have never heard of a bellman that wasn't. It may be worth your while, sir,' added he with a confidential wink, 'to give him a trifle more than he asks, for his voice has a strange way of going off at times. When he's only got a shilling for the job, I've known the poor fellow's lungs so bad that he couldn't be heard two doors off, but with half-a-crown in his pocket he can bellow like a bull.'

'I understand,' laughed Dalrymple.

After some trouble the bellman was dragged out of a neighbouring public-house, which was to his mind far more attractive than a shipwreck. He was a hobbler, with no other symbol of his official position than the bell which he carried by the clapper. Not a handsome man by any means, for his nose turned up and ended in a bright red knob, and, to make matters worse, he

squinted. He spoke in a low whine which had very little of the bull about it, but at the sight of five shillings he began to sing out like a boatswain in a gale of wind.

As Dalrymple was entering the barracks, he noticed the glisten of a silver coin lying between the railings and the building. It was the sixpence that Bobby Beg had flung at the windows, the dust having covered it up until last night's rain had brought it into view again. Though it had no associations for Dalrymple, who had not observed Bobby Beg's act, he thought it might be better employed than lying there; so he fished it out with his stick and threw it to 'a walker,' or professional beggar, who happened to be passing.

Bobby Beg, returning on horseback, witnessed this scene and laughed. An injury was not to be wiped out in that

simple way at all. He had placed something to his credit at any rate, and, though it did not appear to be worth much, he might add to it. But hark! what was the bellman crying in a voice that might almost be heard at Langness?

‘Lost, somewhere between the barracks and the rifle-butts on the race-course, a small leather pocket-book containing papers of no value to anyone but the owner. Whoever will bring the same to Lieutenant Dalrymple will receive five pounds reward.’

With a final clash of the bell, the bellman marched off. Bobby Beg, who had stopped to listen, was now in a great hurry to get back to the stables.

‘Gee-wo!’ said Bobby Beg, digging his heels into his horse’s ribs. ‘Now then, old slowcoach, gee-wo, won’t you?’ In

despair, he tumbled off and began to push behind.

He felt that quite a new light had been thrown upon his prize. He had carefully examined the papers in the pocket-book, and, unable to make head or tail of them, had set them down as valueless. But this was clearly a mistake, otherwise five pounds would not have been offered for their recovery. It was a huge sum in his eyes; he grew dazed with vainly trying to think how many pennies it represented. The reward was a strong temptation to the simpleton who could appreciate money as well as anybody, and had, indeed, a large collection of coins hidden away in some secret corner; but if he accepted it would he not lose his revenge, which was sweeter still? If only he could read the papers he would have a better idea of his position.

He might then return them and claim the reward if they were useless for his purpose ; perhaps he might do so in any case, for would he not have possessed himself of their contents ?

In his extremity Bobby Beg resolved to confide in Black Deborah, who had been very kind to him since he had helped to transport her goods to her new home. He was fortunate enough to meet her near the drawbridge.

A new Wesleyan minister having just been appointed to the town, it had occurred to Black Deborah that his doctrinal notions might be sounder than Mr. Hudson's, in which case she was prepared to secede. The test being the same, she could not be accused of bias. If he would instruct his congregation that this spiritual welfare depended upon their eating her Passover

cakes, she would at once join the Wesleyans and support them with all the authority which Elijah's mantle conferred upon her. This was her delicate mission when she met Bobby Beg.

At his request she accompanied him to a secluded spot up the Silverburn. The trout were leaping in the sunny stream and the linnets were singing in the wilderness of yellow gorse on the other side, and here on the bank stood this strange couple, the majestic-looking mad-woman and the grotesque simpleton, who had courteously laid his brimless hat on the grass at his feet. From the inside pocket of the lowest layer of coats he produced the precious book and humbly asked her to read its contents to him. As she opened it there fluttered to the ground a cutting from a newspaper. He picked it up and handed it to her.

When she had read it, she stared in amazement at him.

‘Where did you get this, Bobby Beg?’ she demanded.

He had to explain all the circumstances, a task that caused him some misgivings. While speaking, he watched her much as a dog watches its master when it does not quite know whether to expect a bone or a stick. As for Black Deborah, her face glowed with triumph and her black eyes were flashing like diamonds.

‘You have done very properly, Bobby Beg, to bring it to me,’ she said.

Bobby Beg seemed rather doubtful on the subject. ‘But aren’t you goin’ for to read me them papers?’ he asked.

‘There is no need. I have read enough.’

‘What’s that, though?’

‘Mind your own business, Bobby Beg,’ said Black Deborah, coolly putting the book in her pocket.

‘There’s five poun’ out for it,’ said Bobby Beg, dolefully. With any other person than the Mad Prophetess, he would have contested the point more keenly.

‘Then, we’ll share it. Fair play, you know, Bobby Beg.’

‘An’ that’s all I’m to get!’

‘No, not all,’ said Black Deborah, with importance. ‘When next I meet the Prophet Elijah, I’ll tell him Bobby Beg has done his duty. You’ll be suitably rewarded, without doubt.’

Instead of going to interview the Wesleyan minister, she returned in haste to her own home. Though her leaflets had hitherto been solely religious in tone, she saw here the chance of making a great hit

with a piece of pungent scandal. Of course, it had to be diluted so as to make five minims fill a quart pot and fetch a quart pot price, but that was a mere matter of time. The scoffers who refused to look at her predictions about the Millennium, would come in crowds to buy, for it was of a highly sensational nature and would therefore be sure of an enormous circulation. It seems clear that Black Deborah forestalled the society journals by a generation.

It took her several hours to expand the exclusive piece of news which she had obtained in rather a shady way. When it was done, she set it in type herself and then proceeded to print it by means of the small printing-press which she possessed. This occupied her until far into the night.

Before going to bed, she sent a messenger

to tell Bobby Beg she should want him at an early hour next morning. And punctually at the time she named he knocked at her door. The result of the interview was surprising enough. When the town awoke, every blank wall was placarded thus :

Price Sixpence.

STARTLING REVELATIONS

ABOUT

MRS. MADDRELL AND LIEUTENANT DALRYMPLE.

To be obtained in the Market-place, at ten o'clock.

DEBORAH THE PROPHETESS,

Isle of Man, otherwise Woman.

CHAPTER X.

FOR HIS SAKE.

WHEN left alone, Nessie hid herself away in her own room and sobbed as if her young heart were breaking. Her mother, coming to the door, found it locked and at first got no answer to her knock. But, as soon as Nessie could control her voice, she said she would be downstairs in a moment.

It was a long moment for the impatient ones waiting for her, but not very long in

reality. After wiping away her tears and smoothing her brown hair at the glass, which, in spite of all her efforts, showed but a pale face without a ray of sunshine in it, she entered the room where the family was assembled, and told them—just as if she were making an ordinary announcement—she was going to marry Dalrymple.

Her mother congratulated her warmly; then with a sudden look of anxiety asked:

‘Has he promised to live in Castle-town?’

‘You dear old beauty, he hasn’t promised to do anything except to take care of me, who am not worth taking care of.’

‘You must make him do that, Nessie. I can’t part with another child. I shall never forget——’

‘Mother dear,’ interrupted Mona, warningly.

‘I was only going to speak of my own wedding,’ said Mrs. Colquitt, reproachfully. ‘But there, it’s no matter. Come,’ added she, looking at her husband who was screwed against the wall by the side of the empty grate, ‘tell your daughter how pleased you are that she has found a good husband and a comfortable home.’

He meekly obeyed. Sorry as he would be to lose Nessie, he was very glad to have her future provided for. His wife would have less temptation to grumble at him for doing nothing; there would be one less mouth to feed, a great consideration where every penny was of importance; and the son-in-law elect, being a wealthy and amiable man, would doubtless help to keep the coach going. In a word, time had

shown the precipice at the bottom of the hill to have been one of his wife's many delusions, as he had already supposed, so his seat would be more pleasant than ever.

Mona, however, was anything but satisfied. Though she kissed her sister very tenderly, she scarcely spoke at all. The more she watched and listened, the more certain she became that, in her anxiety to get Nessie married, she had pushed her into the arms of the wrong man. It was a most distressing mistake for the girl who loved her sister dearly and had really thought herself working for her benefit. Good manager as she was, she had to confess her ignorance of sentimental matters, as this her first attempt at match-making testified. She had been manœuvring for a marriage between Nessie and

Ned, whom she was convinced Nessie liked better than Dalrymple, and yet as the result of her manœuvres a marriage between Nessie and Dalrymple was imminent! How had it come about? And, what was of far more practical importance, how was it to be prevented without causing a fall between the two stools? Being fairly certain of her ground, Mona resolved to see Ned.

She met him in the town that afternoon, his only companion as usual being Toby. He was going to Douglas in connection with some business of his father's, so they had only time for a short talk, but it was long enough for her purpose.

'Ned,' said Mona, stating the case very bluntly so as to observe its effect upon him. 'Nessie is going to marry Mr. Dalrymple.'

He started as if struck by a blow. Though he had seen the sword suspended over his head, it had remained there so long that he had almost taken hope again, and its fall now cut him to the quick.

‘I know,’ he stammered at length. ‘At least, I felt sure of it. I do hope she’ll be happy.’

‘But do you think she will, Ned?’

‘Why not, Mona? You ought to know better than I do.’

‘I don’t think she will,’ said Mona, with decision. ‘That’s the very reason I have come to you. It’s no use trying to disguise the fact—for you can’t, Ned—you are very fond of Nessie, and she is very fond of you. Under other circumstances I should not have interfered, but I feel it would be wrong to remain silent any longer. I am her sister, you know, and

your friend, and there are other reasons. Nessie is far fonder of you than Dalrymple. But, if you won't ask her to marry you, what can she do? She must accept the man who does ask her. Yet even then she won't give him an answer at once—not until to-morrow. I'm sure, Ned, she is hoping you may come to her meanwhile. Won't you do so, and save a great deal of misery to yourself and her and everybody?'

'But would it be fair to Dalrymple?' asked Ned, doubtfully, though the bare possibility of such a delicious thing made his eyes sparkle.

'Quite fair. Nessie has given him no promise of any sort.'

'Then, I'll come,' exclaimed Ned, 'to-morrow morning as early as possible.' And so it was settled.

On her way home, Mona paused opposite Frank's office with some idea of asking his opinion, but eventually passed on. Though he had at last shown himself sensible enough to take her advice and 'fiddle psalms,' she could scarcely rely upon his judgment in this delicate matter. It was, however, a great comfort to her to feel assured that he had no longer to be reckoned with, for the reconciliation between him and Diana was now complete. It had, as all the town knew, been effected by a crab, and but for the shipwreck would have been a more absorbing topic than it was.

At the same time, there were still two questions of general interest. When were husband and wife to be united under one roof? And where were they going to live? When asked, they invariably replied

they had not yet selected a house, which seemed strange. As Diana was giving a supper to a party of friends this evening, there was an idea that she intended to make the desired announcement then.

She did not do so, however, though Frank, who came in just like one of the ordinary guests, sat opposite her at the table. The post of honour was occupied by a fine old venerable gentleman who discoursed pleasantly on beards, rats, lawyers, and other kindred topics—Jacob Maddrell, to wit; and never did anyone mix together more incongruous edibles than he did, to the surprise and amusement of Diana, who devoted herself to him in a way that pleased Frank immensely.

Some one remarked that she grew more and more beautiful every day, which some-

one else explained by pointing at her husband opposite. She wore a magnificent new dress, which had as usual received so many touches from her skilful hands that the dressmaker who had fashioned it would scarcely have known her own work. It set off her shapely figure to perfection. The same art was displayed in the management of her masses of dark hair, and yet there was nothing artificial about her. In whatever she did she was natural and therefore charming.

Jacob Maddrell, sitting by her side, marvelled at the quickness of her flight from mood to mood, and quite fell in love with her. She was grave with one and the next moment gay with another, her keen sympathy enabling her to turn the corners with admirable ease. If sometimes, as she looked at Frank, a shadow

darkened her face, it was gone before any one could notice it. He certainly did not do so, though her mother might have done.

A change came over her manner when the time arrived for her guests to leave. She bade them good-night with a seriousness which everybody observed and nobody could understand. When they had gone, she sank wearily into a chair. Frank stayed with her a little while, and, as Mrs. Sherwood went to bed, husband and wife were left alone together.

His head was brimful of house-keeping arrangements. Now that he had taken the matter in hand, he went at it as impulsively, as he did at everything else. Strangely enough, the opposition came from her; he would have selected a house long ago had she not kept putting him off

in a most unaccountable way. Though all her interest was centred in him, she appeared to take no interest in what he was saying. Though she watched him with a passionate love, which showed itself in every feature of her face, she scarcely answered one of his questions. Nevertheless, he rattled on, absorbed in his own castle-building.

Of course, he said, all her money would be settled upon herself. His income was enough to provide a home for his wife and keep her in comfort. At first they must be contented with narrower quarters than he would have liked to give her, but in time they would be better off. There was that empty house along the Arbory Road ; what did she think of it ?

‘ Never mind that now, Frank,’ she said. ‘ I’m a little tired to-night.’

‘Then I won’t keep you up any longer, Diana,’ he said, rising. He felt rather hurt at her indifference.

‘No, don’t go yet, Frank,’ she pleaded.

He took the hand she held out to him, and sat down looking at her wonderingly.

‘Why, Diana, how cold your hand is!’ he exclaimed.

‘Is it, Frank?’

‘It is indeed. And your face——.’ He laid one hand upon her forehead. ‘Good gracious! It is burning hot. You are quite feverish, dear. You must go to bed at once.’

‘Feverish!’ she said, with a strange little laugh. ‘Are those the symptoms? Well, it’s nearly over.’

Frank was greatly alarmed. He thought her mind was wandering, there was such a want of connection between her ideas.

As he was rising to his feet, she said, in a voice that thrilled through and through him,

‘Frank, kiss me, darling. You have never yet done so. Kiss me, my husband.’

He stooped down and kissed her hot forehead, and she flung her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately in return. It was a long time before she let him go.

‘Though you can’t love me,’ she half-sobbed, ‘I love you, darling—I love you—I love you. Though you should never hear my voice again, remember, I love you. If they were to be my last words, I should say I love you. Frank, my husband, kiss me again.’

When Frank left, he felt extremely uneasy. There could be no doubt that something was very wrong. If Diana was

suffering merely from a slight feverish attack, she might be all right in the morning, but he feared it was much more serious than that. He had never seen her so strange in her manner except once—shortly after their marriage. His only consolation was that he had persuaded her, if necessary, to send for Dr. Mylworry.

Tired though she had acknowledged herself to be, Diana did not go to bed at all that night. She sat up writing letters until nearly daybreak, when she went to her own room to make some alterations in her attire. She put on a dark blue dress and a bonnet to match, all the colours she wore being such as were least susceptible to the action of the sea air. Though her toilette was remarkable for its simplicity, she was very careful over it, and it occupied

her a considerable time. When it was concluded, she took a last long look at herself in the mirror and, leaving her letters on the dressing-table, went into the room where her mother was sleeping soundly, and kissed her. The old lady never stirred until a tear fell on her wrinkled cheek; before she could open her eyes, Diana had glided away.

Before passing out into the silent market-place, she murmured, 'For his sake;' then she closed the door and almost ran down the steps. The sun, just appearing above Langness, had not yet acquired sufficient strength to disperse the mist; the air was chilly; and the grey houses had a miserable aspect—miserable, at least, in the sight of the lonely woman who was passing by. She stopped for a moment opposite Frank's home and looked up at

his window with dim eyes and moving lips. Not a word escaped her, but her pitiful gesture, with only the grim old castle behind as a spectator, was far more eloquent.

If Diana had not been so absorbed in her own thoughts, she would have seen, here and there as she walked along, the placards which Bobby Beg had just been posting on the walls. Some fishermen, who had already read them, were discussing the matter at the drawbridge, and, when Diana approached, their jaws fell open with such precision that they might have been executing a military manœuvre. Closing up into a silent group, they watched her with amazement. What had brought her out at this early hour? Was she running away from the 'startling revelations,' which Black Deborah had promised them for the modest sum of sixpence?

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Though vexed at meeting anybody, Diana never looked at the fishermen, and so had not the smallest notion of the interest they took in her. It was not a very unusual thing for ladies to bathe before breakfast, and, as they generally left their bathing-gowns and towels at some cottage or other, this might easily have been her errand. They knew of no circumstances likely to give colour to any other supposition. However, she was glad to reach the race-course without encountering any one else.

The race-course extends as far as the chevaux-de-frise on the outside of Langness. Here Diana sat down and gazed at the sea lying almost motionless at her feet. Away towards yonder glistening streak of current, it had a lovely iridescent sheen which varied in hue as the sun soared into

the blue sky overhead. But down there in the gully, where the long brown seaweed was waving to and fro, the water looked dark and cold: the more so as, the morning having turned out bright and sunny, all the rest of the world was very beautiful.

For several hours Diana sat without moving. There was no sign of irresolution in her manner, only she had much to think about and there was scarcely any chance of her being disturbed. At length she descended the rocks and peered down into the gully, but started back shuddering, for she had caught sight of a cruel-looking conger curled among the seaweed.

Tremblingly she clambered back to her former position, but, instead of remaining, hastened across the narrow causeway to St. Michael's Isle and wandered among the

rocks there, always keeping close to the edge of the sea.

Meanwhile a solemn little procession was wending its way towards the same spot. It consisted of half-a-dozen bare-headed fishermen carrying a rude coffin on their shoulders, and about a score following behind. They were neither friends nor relatives, these rough, weather-worn mourners with the bronzed faces and horny hands; they were ignorant of the very name of the unfortunate man whose body they were carrying. But their eyes were moist and voices tremulous as they marched along, singing one of their own simple hymns.

Besides a small fort, now used as a light-house, there is a tiny ruined chapel on St. Michael's Isle. It is supposed to be one of the hundred-and-ninety-three built by

Germanus, the first Bishop of Man, in which case its age is upwards of fourteen centuries and a half. Though exposed to every wind, the walls, which show no trace of a tool, are still standing, but the roof has long disappeared. Unfortunately it is quite neglected, and nettles are growing around the broken altar.

- Attached to the chapel, there is an ancient burial-ground. It is so large that the place must formerly have been of considerable importance. The only trace of the bank which once enclosed it is a slight elevation of the turf. The graves have all disappeared, except in one corner where there are a few grassy mounds of recent date without head-stones or anything to show their meaning. These are the graves of the shipwrecked unknown, the melancholy flotsam and jetsam rejected by the

sea, and contemptuously tossed upon the rocks around. Who or what they were no one knows. Their very nationality is often a mystery. Even the Church, ignorant of their religion, will not receive them into its fold. Surely the very excellent tripod—faith, hope, and charity—upon which our Church takes its stand, is sometimes a little weak in one of its legs.

It may be doubted, however, whether a better graveyard could possibly be found for those who go down to the sea in ships. On one side, this wee grassy islet runs gently down to meet the wavelets in Derbyhaven Bay, beyond which is a frowning range of headlands, with pebbly little creeks in between and the mountains standing as sentinels in the background; and on the other side it bristles fiercely against the restless ocean. So, except at the narrow

causeway, the water flows all round and close to the spot where these nameless sleepers lie. And when the breeze is murmuring softly overhead, and the sea playing on the beach, their slumber must be sound and their dreams sweet; and when the gale is shrieking around they may rest happy in the knowledge that no wild cry of 'All hands on deck,' will disturb their well-earned watch below. Is not this a sailor's paradise?

And here the bare-headed fishermen laid their comrade who had gone before. They could not give him anything in the nature of a service; it was not in their power to bestow upon him a solemn benediction; but they did their best. They gathered round the open grave, and, with bowed heads and quavering voices, sang a hymn. Westminster Abbey with all its

splendour never witnessed a more pathetic funeral. Then earth fell on earth, the turf was replaced, and they left the wanderer resting at last.

Besides the fishermen, there was present the sole survivor of the unfortunate vessel wrecked on Dreswick Point by Clague's instrumentality. He was a tall, handsome, gentlemanly man, who had merely been a passenger and therefore knew nothing about the crew, otherwise this poor sailor might have received Christian burial. Though his age could not have exceeded five-and-thirty, his forehead was deeply lined and his hair beginning to turn grey. His face had a sort of faded look which is very difficult to describe. It gave one the idea of his having once plunged deeply into dissipation, and then turned from it to lead a colourless existence enlivened by

neither amusement nor occupation. Character, energy, purpose, all seemed to have been drained out of him; but, whether by a sudden shock or a more gradual process, it was impossible to say.

When the fishermen started on their homeward walk, he strolled towards the rocks which hid Diana from view.

Standing on the extremity of a reef, she had heard the simple hymn and wondered at its meaning. It had come to her like a sweet message from the far-off land on which her eyes were fastened. Mellowed by distance and mingled with the music of the sea, it had sounded like angels singing. When it ceased, she waited hoping to hear it again. But, as time went by, she abandoned that hope and once more looked at the water at her feet.

‘For his sake,’ she murmured, suddenly raising her arms above her head.

With her beautiful face upturned to the sunny sky, she was about to move forward, when she heard a startled voice exclaim :

‘Diana!’

She staggered back, looked at the man standing on the rocks above, and turned as white as snow.

‘Jack!’ she gasped; and fainted.

CHAPTER XI.

BLACK DEBORAH'S REVELATIONS.

LONG before the Castle clock struck ten, there was an excited crowd in the market-place. It was Saturday, so the townspeople were reinforced by a large number of country people, the farmers standing around their carts which were stretched in a row before the barracks, and their wives and daughters, with big baskets on their arms, clustered in the little recess by the side of the Custom-house.

The usual party of male gossips were strolling up and down, talking, however, with more than usual animation. The advocates, in particular, were frisking about in an uncommonly lively way, for they saw a chance of a good crop of libel suits. Many ladies were also present, ostensibly for the purpose of marketing, really to secure a fair share of Black Deborah's 'startling revelations.' Very brisk of speech and movement, they had an embarrassing way of pouncing upon anyone who was supposed to know more than the rest and imploring him to confide in them; 'for you know,' they all said, 'I won't breathe a syllable to a soul.' It was so hard to disoblige them that they heard a good many fibs.

The fishing being over for the week, the cutters were all in the harbour, so

their crews mustered in force. In their sou'-westers, blue guernseys, and big boots, and sometimes with baskets of bread or cabbages on their heads, they added a picturesque element to the scene, and also a noisy one, jabbering in a dozen different tongues. With the exception of the sentry's, however, there were no scarlet coats about, for the soldiers were at morning parade.

The shop-keepers had left their wives to take care of their shops, and their wives had run out to talk. There was a row of these sentinels, one at nearly every door, along each side of the two narrow streets, and by raising their voices a little they flashed the news down the line. Of course, the last woman in the line heard the most amazing things. To mention merely one item: It was reported that Diana and Dal-

rymple had eloped together. The servants popped their heads out of upper windows and made mute gestures to one another, not a very safe way of transmitting intelligence. In the present case, it led some to believe that the Millennium was at hand, its chief function being to corroborate Black Deborah.

It is scarcely necessary to say that, apart from a very natural curiosity, the feeling was one of indignation against this crazy creature. It even extended to Dalrymple, simply because his name was coupled with Diana's, for no reason at all that anyone could see. During his stay in the town he had not made a single friend intimate enough with him to mention what had happened ; so, ignorant of the excitement without, he was quietly drilling his men in the barrack-yard.

There was not a man who did not rally round Diana, while those members of her own sex who had often spoken bitterly against her, now showed that their malice was, like her beauty, but skin-deep. When she was not present, to sting them with a sense of their hopeless inferiority, they could be generous enough.

She had, however, placed herself at a great disadvantage by what looked very like a flight. Her mother, always a late riser, was not yet aware of the fact, but the fishermen who had seen Diana crossing the drawbridge had spread it abroad. Unable to offer any plausible explanation, her friends had to content themselves with attacking Black Deborah, whose placards they had already torn down. But they clamoured for more stringent measures; they wanted to nip the scandal in the bud.

Why, they asked, was this scurrilous lunatic allowed to be at large?

Notwithstanding all the talk, there was nothing done because no one of sufficient authority liked to take the lead. The High Bailiff tapped his gold snuff-box and said he really did not see how he could interfere at present. The facts of the case not having been laid before him, he was not prepared to adjudicate upon it; when he had read what Black Deborah had to say, he might perhaps—though he did not know—be able to see his way more clearly. Sammy Kneale thereupon suggested that a deputation should wait upon the Lieutenant-Governor; another advocate thought it was a matter for the magistrates; a third held that the Deemster was the proper person to see; a fourth proposed that they should take the advice of the Attorney-

General ; and so they went on, talking the clock round. A notorious virago, who happened to be standing in the crowd, said that if she were a man she would wring Black Deborah's neck ; which was perhaps the most sensible advice of the lot.

‘The woman should be locked up beyond all doubt,’ declared Major Christorey to a circle of friends.

‘Will you give the necessary order, major ?’ inquired Sammy Kneale, cocking his crooked nose.

‘In your case with pleasure, Kneale,’ was the blunt retort.

Sammy hastily excused himself. A minute or two later he was observed to glide into a neighbouring house where a few friends were gathered for an early ‘bitter.’

‘I don’t think,’ observed Dr. Mylworry, ‘Black Deborah’s half as mad as people suppose.’

‘She’s as mad as a March hare,’ said the major.

‘Then there’s a great deal of method in her madness. Just think of what she does! She is her own editor, staff, compositor, printer, publisher——’

‘And reading public,’ laughed Mr. Hudson.

‘Not entirely to-day, at any rate. By the powers, here she comes!’

In spite of the rush to see Black Deborah, there was no crushing upon her; she was much too awful a being for that. Being mad, she was popularly supposed to be in league with the Prince of Darkness, an idea that was unshaken by the minute accounts she often published of her inter-

views with spirits of undoubted sanctity. The fitful lustre of her black eyes, which possessed a kind of snake-like fascination, had perhaps something to do with this feeling; and then there was her extravagant height for a woman—she was several inches taller than any man present—and also the noble cast of her features. It was no wonder, then, that many superstitions were associated with her majestic form.

As she advanced, the crowd in the market-place opened before her and closed up behind. Bobby Beg, who was in attendance with a huge pile of the precious leaflets, evidently derived the greatest enjoyment from his importance. He kept grinning right and left, while Black Deborah marched on in front in a most stately way, as became the wearer of Elijah's mantle.

Several sixpences were thrust out to her as she passed by, but she scornfully waved them back. She was not going to waste her triumph in that way. These poor fools, who had hitherto scoffed at her, should follow after her now and bide her time; she would give them a dose of their own worldly wisdom and see how they liked it. So she continued her stately march as far as the sun-dial, when she ascended the glacis and took her stand on the slabs.

She opened the proceedings with an introductory speech, after which the sale began, Bobby Beg disposing of the leaflets, while Black Deborah was careful to collect the money.

The number of copies sold turned out to be far below her expectations. In fact, considered from her standpoint, which was

the financial one, the leaflet was a failure, the reason being that many persons were mean enough to borrow what their neighbours had bought. The High Bailiff, who always looked twice at a sixpence before parting with it, hung his head over Major Christorey's right shoulder, and Mr. Hudson did the same over his left, while a dozen others stared impatiently in front, waiting for their turn at this cheap sixpenny-worth. Lower down in the scale, the process was carried to a still greater extent, some thirty fishermen, for example, getting one of their number to read aloud. In this way, the marketplace was studded with groups, and forty or fifty leaflets sufficed for the whole town.

Black Deborah was furious. Being no respecter of persons, she was irreverent

enough to call the High Bailiff 'a scurvy old thief,' upon which his worship began to entertain a more decided opinion as to the necessity for placing her under restraint.

Customers having ceased to crowd around the sun-dial, Bobby Beg was sent further afield to search for them. Presently his eyes rested upon Dalrymple coming jauntily out of the barracks to see what the excitement was about. Half-incredulous faces were raised from the printed pages which had been rivetting their attention, and turned upon him with amazement and indignation. They could as little understand how he had the impudence to come sauntering among them as he could understand their unfriendly demonstration, if such it was to be considered. A secret dread sprang into his mind, but he

dismissed it as ridiculous. His listlessness never left him ; he lounged along with a supercilious smile which made many a man clench his fist.

Bobby Beg advanced, and, with mock humility, doffed his hat and stood with his yellow head bared before the tall young officer in undress uniform.

‘What do you want?’ demanded Dalrymple, sharply.

Bobby Beg grinned.

‘Get out of my way, you fool.’

‘Ay, fool indeed!’ said Bobby Beg. ‘On St. Stephen’s Day you throwed me sixpence. To-day I throw you six-penn’orth.’ And he thrust a leaflet into Dalrymple’s hands and danced off, singing :

‘The king can only say good-night,
And I can do the same :

I shouts *oie-vie* with all my might,
And that's the for I came.'

Dalrymple's first impulse was to fling the paper away. But, noticing that every group had one like it, he opened it and began to read. The heading gave him an unmistakeable shock, which in a less degree was communicated to the anxious spectators. When he had glanced through a few lines his face was as pale as death. Instead of continuing his walk, he hastily returned to the barracks.

What little remains to be said about Fabian Dalrymple may best be said here. Whether he had previously obtained leave of absence from his colonel or whether he went without it, nobody appeared to know, but one thing is certain: he left Castle-town the same evening and was never seen there again. He had shot his bolt and

missed, but so narrowly as to cause many a shudder afterwards.

Dalrymple had scarcely left the market-place when Ned entered it on his way to ask Nessie to be his wife. He was very happy and very hopeful; had not Mona given him good cause for being so? She would never have spoken as she had done unless she felt quite certain of her sister's mind. So Ned, as he walked along, paused before every empty house and pictured it furnished, with Nessie in the centre of all the beautiful things he meant to buy for her. The great difficulty with him was that she would look well anywhere; every place he tried her in straightway became charming. Under such embarrassing circumstances, he found it impossible to decide upon any one in particular. However, he intended to leave it all to her, so

there was no need to trouble his head about it. Then he had grand plans for helping her family without their knowing anything about it; and he would purchase a nice handy yacht and take Frank and Diana for a long cruise; and Toby was to have a new kennel; in fact his friends were to share in his happiness.

Ned walked through the crowd without taking much notice of the prevailing excitement. It was market-day, and that no doubt accounted for it. But presently his father saw him and marched up, looking as brittle as a wax-work image.

‘What’s the matter, sir?’ exclaimed Ned, struck by his extreme gravity.

‘Come with me, Ned,’ said the major, leading him by the arm. ‘I have something to tell you in private.’

As the two were walking away together,

Ned happened to look across at Diana's house. Then he thought he saw it all. Every blind was drawn down! It was a dreadful blow for him, of course, but his other feelings soon gained the mastery.

'Is Diana dead?' he asked, in a hoarse whisper.

'Dead! No. Why?'

This swift play upon Ned's feelings proved too much for him. His lips moved; but in order to explain himself he had to point at the darkened house.

The major looked and started. While he was still watching, the door opened and a woe-begone yellow old lady in an Indian shawl tottered down the steps. Suddenly she clutched at the railings and fell back crying:

'Diana!'

Several ran to her assistance, but the

majority turned in the opposite direction. On the glaxis stood the black majestic figure of the mad prophetess, pointing with outstretched hand to three persons who were walking in the street below. They were Diana in the centre, Frank on one side of her, and the rescued passenger on the other.

‘Behold,’ cried Black Deborah, ‘a woman and her two husbands!’

She spoke at a venture, knowing the stranger’s name to be Knighton. But she was right.

Diana who had separated herself from her dissipated husband and hidden herself away in Castletown, had had reason to believe him drowned. Dalrymple had learnt he was alive through an advertisement for her, and had concealed the fact lest Frank, released from his supposed

marriage, should oust him from Nessie's favour. The advertisement which was in the pocket-book picked up by Bobby Beg, was the text of Black Deborah's leaflet.

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD-BYE.

IN one corner of the Claddagh House garden there was a grotto of red conglomerate which had been brought from Langness. Ferns, planted in the interstices of the rocks, formed a delicate tracery of many tints of green and brown. It was enclosed by a broad circle of dark-eyed pansies, presided over by several bushes of Guelder roses, and was approached by a lane of raspberry bushes which grew thickly under the gnarled old apple-trees.

On the morning after the events narrated in the last chapter, Nessie was the sole occupant of the grotto which contained a rustic table and seat. Her arms were resting on the table and her head was buried in them. The garden was bathed in a soft warm flood of sunlight, through which floated the scent of marjory and thyme, the songs of the linnets and the finches, and the sweet lullaby of the sea. But here, under the shadow of the rocks, the atmosphere was a little gloomy, as was Nessie. A new and most difficult problem having been presented to her, she was trying hard to solve it, and it seemed to her troubled young mind that the solution could only be reached through suffering. Mona had given her a hint as to what she had said to Ned; and now what was to be done about him and Frank?

Hearing a step on the gravel, Nessie looked up and saw Ned timidly approaching. Though her pretty face had been clouded a moment before, though she was greatly distressed now, she contrived to give him a smile of welcome. He was even more embarrassed than she was.

‘Nessie,’ he stammered, after shaking hands with her, ‘I thought I should like to say good-bye to you alone.’

‘Good-bye, Ned ! Where are you going ?’

‘Abroad.’

‘Why ?’ she asked, with a little gasp.

‘Because I wish to be your brother and—I can’t if I stay here.’

‘You poor, poor old Ned,’ she faltered, and broke down.

‘I have been worrying your poor little life out,’ he said. It was hard work to go

on, but he stuck to it bravely. 'I ought to be ashamed of myself and I am. When I come back I shall be a brother—only a brother, Nessie.'

'Is this for my sake, Ned?' she said, watching him closely. 'Am I driving you away from your own home. Oh, but that must never, never be.'

He saw then that he had made a mistake.

'You are not to blame at all,' he said, stoutly. 'No, not at all, Nessie. You would have loved me if you could, but you can't—and no wonder.' He glanced reproachfully at his own awkward person. 'Now you will be happy with Frank, and therefore I am happy; at least, I ought to be. There are other reasons for my leaving Castletown. My mother is very anxious I should go away for a while.

Toby—look at the rascal pretending to be the most innocent dog in creation,’ said Ned, glad to turn his face away from her watchful gaze—‘Toby has got me into a row with the High Bailiff. He is so savage that he won’t speak to either my father or myself. So, you see, Nessie, I’m going away for the peace of the town.’

‘If I only thought——’

‘Oh, but you mustn’t think,’ said Ned, who was unusually talkative this morning. ‘It’s bad for young brains. To tell the truth, Nessie, I’m rather glad to have a chance of seeing foreign countries. I want brightening up a bit; everybody says so. I made up my mind last night and I thought I should like to tell you alone, so here I am. When I come back,’ he hesitated, it was so difficult to say, ‘I hope I shall find you married and happy.’

Nessie was crying silently.

‘But, Ned,’ she began.

‘No, no, let me do all the talking. And now, Nessie,’ he said, abruptly, taking her hand, ‘I’m off. Good-bye, and God bless you!’

Before she could say a word, he was gone, hurrying away through the garden with Toby at his heels. Cain the Leg, who was resting upon his spade, watched him striding by and marvelled at his speed; but when he noticed Ned’s white face and contracted brows, he also grew troubled. It may have been owing to some subtle sense of sympathy, or it may have been merely imitation, but Cain the Leg began to dig with vigour.

After fortifying himself by means of a walk through the fields, Ned returned to the town. As he approached the draw-

bridge, he drew a leather muzzle from his pocket, summoned his shaggy companion, and put it on. Toby looked perplexed and not a little mortified. In this strange apparel he presented a singularly ferocious appearance, notwithstanding his piteous gaze at his master, who adjusted the buckles with as much care as if he were dealing with an untamed tiger.

‘For Nessie and for me, Toby!’ said Ned, half-apologetically, as he gave the finishing touch and stood up. ‘You don’t mind that, do you, old chap?’

The sailors standing by the bridge were inclined to jeer at Toby. They stared, pulled the pipes out of their mouths, and prepared to heave a remark or two.

‘What’s up with the dog, Master Ned?’ asked Jonathan Vondy.

‘His temper is out of order, Jonathan.’

‘Ay!’

‘Yes, he has been seized with a delirious craving for human flesh.’

‘That’s bad, though,’ said Jonathan, edging a little further away, while everyone present showed a sudden desire to examine his neighbour’s back.

This preliminary test satisfied Ned of the efficacy of his appliance. Heavy-hearted though he was, he could not help smiling as he passed on. Arrived at Frank’s office, he opened the door, sent Toby in, and then followed himself. Frank, who was writing at the table, leaned back in his chair and regarded this strange couple with surprise. Toby was so ashamed of himself that he sneaked into a corner between the side-board and the wall, and only his muzzled head protruded. His master stood opposite and pointed at him.

‘There!’ he exclaimed. ‘Did you ever see such a fierce brute in all your life? A perfect monster, Frank. A regular demon. There’s not a man, woman, or child safe in the town when he is about, and yet I haven’t the heart to part with him.’

‘But what’s the matter now, Ned?’

‘Matter now! Why, that desperate animal has worried a colt of the High Bailiff’s, and he is furious, thirsting for the blood of all the Christoreys. Money won’t recompense him, he says; he wants blood. He demands Toby as the first victim. There’s only one way out of the difficulty, Frank. Toby and I are going to make a bolt for it as soon as possible—to-morrow, in fact.’

‘I had no idea,’ said Frank, smiling though somewhat bewildered, ‘that the High Bailiff was such a blood-thirsty old

fellow. You don't really mean that you are leaving the island ?'

'Indeed I do,' replied Ned, with a sorry attempt at playfulness. 'I'm going to travel—become a man of the world, you know. At present I'm insular, angular, ignorant of all but rocks and sea and fish. In a year or two I'll come back a polished traveller crammed full of knowledge.' He looked at himself and laughed.

After playing with his pen for a moment or two, Frank raised his eyes to Ned's face and said :

'And Nessie ?'

'Oh ! she and I have arranged to be brother and sister for the rest of our lives. That is, if her husband won't object.'

'And you are willing to agree to those terms ?'

‘Yes.

‘I must say I can’t understand it. It is so unlike you, Ned, to leave a thing half-done.’

‘Oh, but this isn’t done at all. Nessie would never care for me except as a brother and it would be downright cruelty to go on bothering her.’

‘Look here, Ned, my engagement was broken off entirely through my own fault. Therefore I must suffer for it. And certainly I’m not going to act the dog in the manger. While I have been out of the matter, you and Nessie have been getting to love each other.’

‘There you are wrong, Frank,’ interrupted Ned, sadly. ‘Nessie’s happiness depends upon her marrying you, so I have set my heart upon it.’

‘Well, Ned, you are the most unselfish

fellow in the whole world. Is this the reason why you are leaving Castletown ?'

Ned could only point at Toby.

'Because if it is,' continued Frank firmly, 'I'll go straight to your people and beg them to forbid your doing anything of the sort.'

'It is my mother's wish that I should go.'

'But she doesn't know everything.'

'Yes, Frank, she does. And I will ask you to remember this, I don't return until Nessie is married to somebody. Whether you are that somebody rests with yourself.' Then, in the same abrupt way that he had taken leave of Nessie, he took leave of Frank.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

SEVEN months later, on the first of May, Nessie and Frank were alone together on the rocks at Scarlett, Mona having gone off, as she was careful to explain, to see what the view looked like from the top of the Stack.

It was a glorious evening, not unlike that other on which our story opened. The sun hung like a ball of fire in the hazy blue sky barred here and there with gold and crimson ; the mountains were decked

with green and purple ; and a filmy veil of pink was stealing along the valleys. The ensign over Castle Rushen had a languid droop, for there was not wind enough to stir it, and the smoke from the grey houses around its walls rose in parallel lines. The tide was high and the water a sheeny blue, except close to the coast where the shadows lay darkly upon the water. Yonder, a white-sailed vessel appeared to be sailing in the air ; it floated high above the horizon which was distinctly outlined below. Langness had caught the warm glow of the sunset, and looked so soft and bright that it was hard to imagine a shipwreck there.

‘ This morning,’ said Nessie, ‘ I had a letter from Diana.’

‘ What did she say ?’

‘ Very little about herself, though she

asked many questions about you. Her husband is quite a changed man, she says; he is very attentive to her and very fond of her. Poor Diana! she writes from Paris.'

'I know,' said Frank, with a sigh, 'for she met Ned there.'

'And you have heard from him?'

'Yes, this morning also. According to his own account, he is enjoying himself immensely?'

'Dear good old fellow! Do you really, really think he is happy?'

'That is a hard thing to say.'

It was now Nessie's turn to sigh. Just where the Stack threw its black shadow across the sea, a fisherman was slowly paddling his skiff towards the harbour. The sight recalled to her memory the evening when she and Ned had been there

together. Now, he was wandering alone in a foreign country, and she—Heigh-ho! if every cloud has its silver lining, every silver lining has its cloud.

‘Does he say when he is coming home again?’ asked Nessie, studying the water at her feet.

‘Not yet. Not until—’ He stopped, looked at her wistfully, and then went on: ‘Nessie, Ned is in exile. He is such an uncommonly determined fellow that there is no doing anything with him. In fact, he won’t come back until we have done what he wishes.’

‘What he wishes!’ exclaimed Nessie, with a little start of surprise.

‘Yes, Nessie, what the best and truest and noblest friend we have wishes. I long to see his honest face again, and to get a grip of his manly hand. And Toby the

truculent, Toby with the shaggy coat and crop ear and stumpy tail—can't you see the rascal prowling along beside his great awkward good master? Oh, Nessie, we must have them back.'

Nessie blushed, but made no answer.

'There is only one way to do it,' said Frank, taking her hand. 'May I keep this? It was mine once, but I threw it away. My darling, need I tell you how I love you?'

'Frank,' she murmured, her pretty face as red as the setting sun, 'I know.'

'Do you, you rogue!' he exclaimed, taking her in his arms and kissing her. And so, after a separation which had threatened to be lifelong, the lovers were united. 'Oh, Nessie,' he added, presently, 'I could be so happy if it were not for Ned and Diana.'

The eyes of both filled with tears. Their dreams had once been of perfect happiness; now they know it to be unattainable. But this evening, sitting by the side of the beautiful sea, with the ruddy sky over-head and love in their warm young hearts, Nessie and Frank were as happy as they ever will be in this world.

THE END.

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